

T O W A R D L U T H E R A N U N I O N

A Scriptural and Historical Approach by
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INTRODUCTION

THE writing of this book was prompted by a number of considerations. There is the need, for example, of restating the Scriptural principles of fellowship in view of the many divergent views and practices of recent development. The attitude of Holy Writ is simple, yet comprehensive. The holy Apostle John writes: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" (1 John 1:7). As the context plainly states, God Himself is Light, and He has revealed Himself and His will in and through the Word of Life, the Word that was made incarnate for all men. This Word revealed Himself and the way of salvation and sanctification when He personally proclaimed the truth and when subsequently He sent His Holy Spirit to lead the men chosen by Him into all truth, the inspired writings of our Bible.

The Bible is not a mere depository of historical facts pertaining to the children of Israel in the Old Testament and to the early Church and its conflicts in the New Testament. When the Apostle Paul writes, Rom. 15:4: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," he states a principle which applies not only to the contents of the Old Testament, but also to the teaching of the New Testament. The eternal and omniscient God, who is Himself the real Author of the Bible, stated the doctrines which men were to believe and the principles which men were to follow until the end of time. Unless the Scripture itself definitely limits the application of any statement made, of any principle laid down, to some particular circumstances

and conditions, such statements and principles have binding force today. For example, the principles "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9) and "That ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10) must be accepted by all Christians to this day and hour.

The Scriptural statements bearing on the fellowship issue seem to require re-study and re-statement particularly at this time when we are dealing with large-scale movements for the union of churches, now accelerated by the impact of the global war in which our country is engaged. The tendency has found its fruition in the Evangelical-Reformed merger, in that of various Methodist bodies, in the much advertised Episcopalian-Presbyterian merger plans. Coming nearer home, we have the fact of the Norwegian union in 1917, of the formation of the United Lutheran Church of America in 1918, of the American Lutheran Church, and of the American Lutheran Conference in 1930. The recent conventions of the American Lutheran Church at Mendota, Illinois, and of the United Lutheran Church of America in Louisville, Kentucky, clearly indicate the trend of the times. The resolutions of the Missouri Synod in 1938 and in 1941 took full cognizance of developments which seemed favorable to a mutual acknowledgment of certain doctrinal agreements that apparently had been reached.

The re-study of Scriptural principles was demanded in particular by the fact that certain extreme views and positions have developed. On the one hand we seem to have a rigidity which will not be satisfied with anything less than a complete cleavage and refuses to recognize any kind of a twilight zone under the heading of the universal priesthood of believers and the *una sancta*; while on the other hand we have those who cling with the greatest tenacity to the man-made distinction between fundamental and non-

fundamental doctrines and are ready to have contradictory teachings dwell in the same ecclesiastical structure. This factor alone would seem to require a re-study of the entire Scriptural background and that in an entirely objective manner, without any polemical interest.

Hence the book was written with the intention of making it objective. It is not in any way intended as a criticism of current expressions in the matter of Lutheran union, its purpose being simply to supply the reader, presumably an earnest and honest searcher for the truth, with the material which will enable him to form his own judgments. At the same time the readers should realize that the subject is far too large to be treated exhaustively even in a volume such as this with sufficient fullness to enter all questions.

Two deductions must, in the opinion of the authors, be avoided. The first is that of the church member who looks superficially at the theological questions still in dispute and brushes them all aside as so much hairsplitting. The other is the tendency to make every difficult situation a "case in casuistry," thereby giving the pastor carte blanche to act as he thinks best. There may be difficult matters, unusual cases, "exceptional" inasmuch as they depart from the usual and normal, which, however, can well be viewed under a clear Scriptural principle and are not "cases in casuistry" in the proper sense of the term. This book relegates comparatively few cases to that category.

While intended for the pastor and theologian, the book will be read with profit, we believe, by the layman who is following with some interest the activities of his Church and Synod. If the presence of a few Greek and Latin terms frightens him as he turns these pages, we would encourage him to read and be convinced that the book is written with laity as well as clergy in mind. The question might be asked "Why this recourse to the original Greek and to the Latin

of our Lutheran fathers?" The answer is twofold. For one thing, we wish to make quite sure that the very words of Scripture be considered by those who would follow the arguments of these chapters; and we would convince especially the theologian that the authors claim no originality for the positions taken, but have both in their positions on these fellowship questions and in the presentation of them submitted what has through the centuries been recognized as Lutheran doctrine. A second reason for the use of a large amount of theological terminology is the merit of condensation which has thus been gained. What is said in these twelve chapters could indeed have been said in simpler language, but in order to gain the same clearness of definition for our subject, it would have been necessary to expand the volume to twice its size. It is a mistake to think that "simple" language is always clear. Simple language requires many more words in order to achieve that clearness which the crisp, scholastic terminology offers to the student. If this is an apology for the condensation which has been practiced, it is also an invitation to the readers to peruse these chapters with concentrated attention and a pledge to him that he will find them consistent and coherent.

As we re-read these pages of manuscript the eye catches expressions and judgments which cannot only be misconstrued, but will certainly be misunderstood, *if taken by themselves*. The book shares this quality with every discussion of a controversial subject. It is possible to quote from any theological treatise which goes beyond the A B C of our teaching, passages which, taken by themselves, would be subject not only to misinterpretation, but to honest misunderstanding. We offer no apologies for statements which in these chapters may give rise to disputing if viewed *by themselves*, outside their connection and outside the context of chapters that precede and that follow. The gist of the

theology regarding the fellowship question cannot be written on one page or even in a chapter of ten pages. It requires the statement of one point at a time, each considered with its own Scripture background, and it requires a logical process and progress which would be intolerably interrupted and obscured if on every page or in every chapter the complete analysis of all that preceded and of all that follows, were made part of the discussion.

The book has grown out of a study of practically the entire literature of the past twenty-five years related to the Lutheran union movement. In one capacity or another, as writers of books and articles, as lecturers and members of synodical and intersynodical committees, the authors have been part of these movements.

While the separate chapters are individual contributions of the collaborators, each writer fully stands for what the other has written. In other words, it would be fruitless to search in one chapter for a modification of what has been written in another or for a presentation of some conflicting view. The authors made every effort to make Scripture the basis of all arguments presented in this book.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	V
<i>Chapters</i>	
I. Laying the Foundation	1
II. Some Dialectical Premises	23
III. The Limitations of Reason in Apprehending the Truths of Scripture	36
IV. The Rightful Place of Controversy in Church Life	68
V. The Church, Unity, and Fellowship	82
VI. What About Doctrinal Aberrations?	111
VII. Unionism	146
VIII. The Universal Priesthood of Believers	165
IX. Pulpit and Altar Fellowship	173
X. Prayer Fellowship	192
XI. Is There a Unionism in Private Conduct?	207
XII. Co-operation in External <i>Not Kretschmar</i>	220



CHAPTER I

Laying the Foundation

The Scripture cannot be broken. JOHN 10:35

ONE of the most outstanding characteristics of the present age in American church history is the quest for unity among the various denominations, both liberal and conservative, and in particular among the various groups of Lutherans. Even where unity is confused with union, or vice versa, this tendency is unmistakable; it is, in fact, the predominating trait in some church bodies. The resolutions of practically all church bodies will corroborate this statement, and a glance at the recent publications, particularly the church papers, will further substantiate its truth.

According to Scripture there can be no doubt as to the desirability of unity, and therefore this demand will receive its full measure of attention in a special chapter of the present monograph. But the same Scripture that demands unity in the Church also defines the meaning of this unity and states the fundamental prerequisite for a God-pleasing unity. It is all embraced under the heading "unity of the spirit"

(Eph. 4:3), and the Apostle explains it by saying that Christians should "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10c).

According to Scripture this unity presupposes one thing, a feature which is absolutely essential to the establishment and maintenance of a God-pleasing oneness of spirit, and that is the full agreement as to the inspiration, the infallibility, and the inviolability of the Holy Scriptures. As we shall see, we are compelled by Holy Writ itself to make this a *conditio sine qua non* in all negotiations tending toward church fellowship of every kind and degree. It is entirely Biblical to declare, with Luther: "Upon a single word, yea, upon a single letter more depends than upon heaven and earth." Or, as he puts it in his treatise *That These Words, This Is My Body*, etc.: "As for me, every verse makes the world too small for me" (*Mir ist also, dass mir ein jeglicher Spruch die Welt zu enge macht*). (St. Louis Ed., XX:788, § 59.)

As a matter of fact, our entire discussion will revolve around one word of the New Testament text, namely, the short declaration *γέγραπται*, "It is written." In more than threescore passages it stands as the bulwark of divine truth, and the number of passages in which other forms of the verb *γράφειν* are used will bring the total to well over one hundred instances. It is a word which does not merely record an historical fact, but carries a challenge to every reader of the Bible, as does the noun *γραφή*, which can mean only one thing, namely, the written record, or the divine truth offered in written words of human language (2 Tim. 3:16).

This being the basis on which all true Christians, as a matter of fact, are bound to stand, we can next offer the question *What does Scripture mean by inspiration?*

Even in the Old Testament we have statements which tell us what inspiration is. The holy writer explains in Ps. 45:1:

"Moved is my heart with a good word; speaking am I my productions to a King; my tongue the pen of a skillful writer." So the impulse to write came from without, and the holy writer was producing the poem, yet his tongue was the pen, the instrument of one who is Himself a skillful writer, the one who was the real Author of the psalm. The same facts are presented in 2 Sam. 23:1-3, where the text reads, literally: "And these are the last words of David: (Divine) saying of David, the son of Jesse, and (divine) saying of the man who is raised up, of the anointed one of the God of Jacob and the one who is pleasant in the songs of Israel. The Spirit of Jehovah has spoken in me, and His speech upon my tongue. Spoken has the God of Israel to me." So there was a revelation imparted by a supernatural agency, not as a product of David's literary skill and ability. The Spirit's word was transmitted to David's tongue, so that he was the organ, or instrument, of the Holy Spirit.

If we now turn to the New Testament, we are overwhelmed by the evidence and testimony presented there. We may turn at once to the classical passage in 2 Tim. 3: 15-17, which reads, literally: "And that from babehood thou knowest the Sacred Writings, which have the power to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture (is) God-breathed, and is valuable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that perfect may be a man of God, to every good work fully prepared." Here the Sacred Writings are identified with Scripture, a term which was clearly understood by every person who had been trained according to the Jewish system of education. And of this Scripture, this written record, put down in words of human language, the Apostle says that all Scripture is God-breathed, *Scriptura divinitus inspirata*. God breathed the Scripture, had it proceed out of Himself like breath, the breath of His mouth,

breathed it into the men who wrote at His instigation, transmitted it to their minds.

Other New Testament passages are just as clear and comprehensive. In 1 Pet. 1:10 f. the Apostle writes, literally: "Concerning which salvation the Prophets, who prophesied regarding the grace intended for you, earnestly sought and diligently scrutinized, ransacking what things or what kind of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, indicated when He witnessed in advance of the sufferings which would come to Christ and the manifestations of glory after them, to whom it was revealed." So it is of the revelation of the grace and salvation of God which was intended for his readers that St. Peter makes the amazing remarks that the Prophets of old, the very men who uttered the prophecies concerning this grace of God, were obliged to study, to ransack their own writings. They made every effort to understand the entire subject matter as well as the significant features of the time when these marvelous happenings were to occur, specifically the sufferings of Christ and His elevation to glory. So the Prophets, in penning their prophecies, were conscious of the fact that they were being used as the Spirit's organs and tools; they put down the words of divine revelation as they received them. But these truths were so far above their intelligence and human understanding that they must needs search through, and diligently study, their own writings. It follows, therefore, with a clearness which we cannot set aside, that the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, spoke the very things, transmitted to the Prophets all the words, which they wrote down. The activity to which St. Peter refers did not consist in a mere meditation on matters which they had spoken in a condition of ecstasy, but in a meditation and systematic study of the writings which they produced at the impulse of the Spirit.

Another statement from the pen of St. Peter is that in

2 Pet. 1:21, where we read, literally: "For not by the will of a man was prophecy once brought out, but moved by the Holy Spirit spoke the men of God." In the preceding verse that Apostle had stated that no prophecy of Scripture was made, or produced, by private interpretation, so that the statements found in the written documents would be dependent upon mere human ideas. The will of man, of any man in fact, had nothing to do with the bringing out, or producing, of any prophecy. Rather, says St. Peter, the men of or from God, those commissioned by Him, spoke because they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost impelled them to speak; they were His agents in making known in their prophecies what He wanted men to know. Again, the human element in the situation was not mechanized, as some have said; the Prophets were not reduced to the position of animated typewriters. What they were impelled to write they expressed in words of human language. But the Apostle clearly declares that the Holy Spirit is the Source of prophetic inspiration, and the writings of the Prophets have Him as their real Author.

Lest someone think that we cannot be sure of the individual words of the inspired Record, we refer all honest searchers for the truth to 1 Cor. 2:12 f., where St. Paul writes, literally: "We, however, did not receive the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is out of God, that we might know the things which are given to us by God (as gifts of grace), what also we speak, not in words teaching doctrine of man's wisdom, but in those teaching the doctrine of the Spirit, making comparison of spiritual things with spiritual." The thought of this section really begins in verse 7, where the Apostle says: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," namely, the mystery which was hidden in the eternal wisdom of God, beyond the reach of human eye or ear, and hence human understanding, until it pleased God to make

it known to and through His Apostles, as the writers of the New Covenant. The things which St. Paul and the other Apostles thus received they transmitted to others. He expressly declares that he does not speak and teach in words bearing or conveying the doctrine of men, but in those bearing the doctrine of the Spirit, so that his statements, his entire teaching under the circumstances, matched spiritual truth with spiritual expression in words, so that the apostolic utterance in his teaching was in full agreement with the thought revealed to him by the Holy Ghost. There cannot be the slightest doubt that St. Paul here claims for himself verbal inspiration. This fact is supported also by other passages in the Apostle's letters, as in 1 Cor. 15:1 ff.

The holy Apostle John asserted the same truth concerning the message which he taught. We refer in particular to 1 John 1:3 f., which reads, literally: "What we have seen and have heard we declare also to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. And the fellowship, namely, ours, is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we are writing on our part that our joy may be complete." Cp. John 14:26; 15:26. So St. John was not presenting his own wisdom, his own philosophy, but he was acting as a delegate, a messenger, in making known what he had seen, what he had heard, what had been imparted to him in the years of his wonderful personal intimacy with the Savior. This information, dispensed by him in his teaching, in itself possessed the power to bring others into fellowship with the Father and the Son. But the fact of inspiration was connected not only with the spoken message of the Apostle: it was inherent also in the written word of the Apostle, when he so functioned. All the teaching of John in his capacity as Apostle, whether by word of mouth or by communication with the pen, was under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

The number of instances in Scripture where the human

writer indicates the supernatural source and direction under which he was reporting the truth is overwhelmingly large. In the Gospels alone we have almost one hundred passages which support the fact of inspiration. And if one will go to the trouble of counting all the references to this phenomenon as they are found from Genesis to Revelation, there will be an astonishing array of passages.* The most striking fact in this connection is the manner in which Jesus quotes from the Old Testament, not only by referring to it as a unit given by God, but also to its component parts as coming under the same heading of inspiration. He, as well as others who shared His attitude, introduced their quotations from the Old Testament by references to the well-known entity commonly called, in the singular, Scripture (*γραφή*), or *the Scripture* (*ἡ γραφή*), as in John 7:38, 42; 10:35; Acts 8:32; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:22; 4:30; James 2:8; 1 Pet. 2:6; 2 Pet. 1:20; — or collectively the Scriptures (*αἱ γραφαί*), as in Matt. 21:42; 26:54; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:27; John 5:39; Acts 17:2, 11; 18:24, 28; 1 Cor. 15:3 f. Other names for the Sacred Volume are the Holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:2), the prophetic Scriptures (Rom. 16:26), the Scriptures of the Prophets (Matt. 26:56), the Holy Writings (2 Tim. 3:15), the Oracles, or Words, of God (Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 4:11). Particularly striking and convincing are references as used by Jesus and others in such well-known passages as Matt. 22:31 (“Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you *by God*,” quoted from Ex. 3:6), Mark 12:36 (“David himself said *by the Holy Ghost*,” the reference being Ps. 110:1). The same procedure is followed by the Apostles in Acts 1:16; 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15, and elsewhere.

What conclusions are we bound to reach on the basis of these and hundreds of other passages in which the writers

* Cp. P. E. Kretzmann's *The Foundations Must Stand*, especially pp. 109 to 123.

of the Bible testify to the fact that they produced their writings not in the wisdom of men, but as the wisdom of God? See 1 Thess. 2:13. Cp. 1 Cor. 2:5, 13. A definition which was written a number of years ago will suffice as well today as then: "Inspiration is that miraculous process by and through which God, specifically the Holy Spirit, at specified times and for specific purposes, caused certain men, the Prophets of the Old Testament and the Evangelists and Apostles of the New Testament, to write down in words of human speech both such historical information as they were already familiar with and such other accounts and immediate revelations concerning future events and the mysteries of salvation as are a matter of His divine omniscience and wisdom alone, in a way that every possibility of error, not only in every main proposition, with its discussion, but also in every subsidiary remark and incidental reference, was eliminated from the outset, while still, in this breathing in, both the natural characteristics and capacities and the acquired abilities of the various writers were employed in such a way as to produce that variety of style which gives the Bible its wide and varied appeal and makes the Bible both as a whole (*plenary* inspiration) and in its every word (*verbal* inspiration) a product of God Himself." (*The Foundations Must Stand*, p. 63 f.)

The question will naturally arise: Why such a comprehensive definition? We answer: Chiefly because men have not recognized the full implications of the Scriptural teaching on inspiration and are therefore proposing erroneous or inadequate definitions for the phenomenon of inspiration. We could discourse at length on the various theories of inspiration which have been proposed by theologians and others in the course of the centuries, such as the Intuition Theory, the Theory of Mere Divine Assistance and Direction, the Illumination Theory, the Dynamic Theory, the Dictation

Theory, the Theory of Subject Inspiration, the Theory of Partial, or Limited, Inspiration, the Theory of Progressive Revelation, the Theory of a Wider Conception of Inspiration, and others. All these have been described briefly in the monograph referred to above (pp. 9-11).

Some of these theories have been taken over wholly, or in part, in the Lutheran Church of America, as, for example, a variety of the Illumination Theory, which might be called the Theory of Intensification, for it holds that inspiration signifies only the general influence of God upon all the faculties of the holy writers as they were employed in producing the Holy Scriptures, the final result being still subject to error except in the parts pertaining to faith and doctrine. That this theory, and others similar, are held by leading theologians in certain sections of the Lutheran Church in America, is apparent from the statements like the following: "Whatever 'theory of inspiration' there may have been was applied only to the Old Testament; for, in the first place, there was no body of Christian writings which possessed unique authority, and, in the second place, 'inspiration' was a common thing." Again: "The claims of a mechanically infallible Bible, verbally perfect, do not hold in the light of the facts. What the theologian calls the Word of God, namely, the spiritual content of the Bible, is an authority of freedom." And again: "There must be a clear distinction kept in mind between the Word of God and the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God because it contains the Word of God. The Prophets and Apostles spoke the Word of God. What they spoke in its essential features, but not in its completeness, has been preserved in the record of salvation. The record is only the container and conveyer of the living truth." And again: "With all its strong points in its loyalty to its theory of verbal inspiration that guarantees an infallible Bible and further its fidelity to the Confessions formu-

lated in the sixteenth century, a reading of it makes one wonder whether it is a theology for men of our day. One need but point to its presentation of the doctrine of creation as being finished in six days of twenty-four hours each to see that it follows a view of Scripture that would make a good many who are loyal to Scripture unable to follow it.”* And again: “The Bible, it is affirmed, is not the Word of God in the sense of a verbal, mechanical [?], literal inspiration. And the generation to which our preaching is addressed asks for more than the claim of authority for a book, a claim which is considerably weakened by the controversies of those literalists [?] who have constant recourse to the words ‘infallible’ and ‘inerrant’ and who affirm utterly untenable and most fallible theories of geology, astronomy, and millennial events because, say they, ‘the Bible is an infallible Book.’” And, to bring this array of testimonies against the inspiration of the Bible to a close: “The idea of verbal inspiration and the practice of literal interpretation may destroy the reality of the Bible’s message.” (Cp. *The Foundations Must Stand*, pp. 14-17.) In view of these statements, one feels some hesitancy to accept even the explanation of a “unique co-operation,” as proposed in a recent document. For according to the clear teaching of the Bible itself, there was strictly speaking no “co-operation” (as on equal terms) or working together between the Holy Ghost and the human writers. There was only one real Author, and He was the Holy Spirit, who used these men as His instruments and tools. The word “co-operation” will not cover this unique activity of the Spirit. Although the entire

* This position is at least, to that extent, honest, for it admits that one who accepts the Bible account must think of the creation days as ordinary, twenty-four-hour days, and not as aeons or periods. Consistency then requires that the Bible account be declared untrue, in the interest of a science falsely so called.

process is a mystery beyond human understanding, there is nothing of a contradictory nature in the situation. The Holy Ghost was trying to communicate with the minds and hearts of men, to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. Hence He did not make use of a divine supramundane language, but He employed human speech as it was in use among men in general. There certainly could be no difficulty about having Him, who is essentially omniscient, omnipotent, and all-wise, to make use of the minds of the human writers whom He chose as His organs of transmission in such a way as to include the historical information which they possessed, their vocabulary and style of expressing themselves, in short, all the natural talents and capacities as well as the acquired abilities, in His manner of making known the mysteries of God to men, to convey to their minds and hearts what He intended them to know, so that "whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). The interesting fact in this connection is the obvious difference in the presentation of the various human writers, a diversity of style and contents being included which immediately appeals to different classes of readers and thus becomes effective according to the will of God. It is only by presenting the doctrine of inspiration in a manner that does not deny any of the facts brought out that we shall do justice to the Scripture passages which clearly teach this truth. Whether the information given is in the field of doctrine in the limited sense of the term, or in that of history, or geography, or pedagogy, or in any other area of knowledge, it is *eo ipso* true and correct, because it is contained in the inspired record. It is characteristic of all aberrations regarding this doctrine in particular that they make use of evasion, of attempts to weaken the unmistakable teaching of the Bible, of letting human reason decide on matters which are and will ever remain beyond human ken. The statement of our

Savior "Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17) cannot be set aside by declarations of fallible human beings.

It is precisely at this point that we find one of the chief obstacles which prevents unity and union in the church at large, and in the Lutheran Church in America in particular. The infallibility, the inerrancy, of Holy Writ, as asserted by the Sacred Volume itself, demands that every thought, *πάν νόημα*, every statement which flows from normal human thinking, must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). To confine this obedience to the doctrines necessary to salvation is placing a restriction on the Word which is refuted by scores of passages, which, in fact, militates against the essential unity of Scriptures. We are bound to subscribe to dicta of Luther like the following: "My dear fellow, God's Word is God's Word: that will not permit much picking out (*das darf nicht viel Menckelns*). Anyone who makes God a liar or blasphemes Him in one word or says that it is a small thing for Him to be blasphemed or made a liar, he blasphemes the entire God and thinks little of all blasphemy of God. He is a God who will not permit Himself to be divided, or to be praised in one place and rebuked in another, to be honored in one place and despised in another." (*Dass diese Worte usw. noch fest stehen*. St. Louis Ed., XX:775, § 28.)

This position, as held by Luther, is demanded by the teaching of Scripture concerning its own *unity*. There is only one Author of the Bible, though there are sixty-six books contained in the volume. This divine Author, who spoke through the Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, not only does not contradict Himself, but He offers a message which is an essential unit and organism. As the various members and organs of the human body may not all have the same degree of strength and usefulness and yet together form that entity which functions as a unit, so the Bible is

a unit, a body which normally functions when all the component parts are active in bringing the full revelation of God's truth to mankind. This viewpoint is strengthened by another consideration given in many parts of the Bible, *viz.*, that this Word of God is in itself a revelation and manifestation of the Godhead through the Person of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the divine Wisdom, the Logos, or Word of God. To confine this manifestation to those sections of the Bible which present the doctrine of salvation *expressis verbis*, is to place restrictions on the Bible which are contrary to its expressed purpose. In the Old Testament not only the primary and secondary Messianic prophecies, not only the symbolic accounts connected with the festivals and sacrifices, but even many historical episodes are in themselves of a prophetic nature and find their true fulfillment in some event in the life of Jesus. Cp. Hos. 11:1; Jer. 31:15. The same is true in the New Testament. We may value the comprehensive and deeply spiritual presentation of the Gospel of John more highly than the accounts in the Synoptics, but all the Gospels in all their parts must be accepted as component sections of the great unit of Holy Writ. Likewise we may value the complete doctrinal presentation of certain Pauline letters more highly than some of the minor epistles of the New Testament, yet all the canonical writings of the New Covenant must be accepted as a whole and in all their parts if we want to do justice to the clear demands of Scripture. It is necessary for every Bible student to apply the word of the Apostle Paul to the entire Scripture: "Whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning."

This position is demanded, furthermore, by the *inviolability* of the Holy Scriptures. In various books of the Bible we find the warning against adding anything to Scriptures or taking anything away (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18). The warning emphasis in Prov. 30:5 f. is unmistakable: "Every word

of God is pure; He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." That God wants no tampering with His Word, whether such criticism concerns great matters or small, fundamental or non-fundamental doctrines, is evident especially from the words of our Savior that even the individual jot and tittle must be respected as a part of the infallible Record (Matt. 5:18). But the everlasting bulwark of the inviolability of Holy Scriptures is contained in the Lord's remark "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), that is, it cannot be dissolved in even one small word, such as He Himself quotes in that connection. The Bible having spoken on any subject whatsoever, there is only one thing for the believing Christian to do, namely, to accept such statement unhesitatingly. St. Paul is so insistent upon all that he has written that he issues instructions: "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man (or: indicate that man by an epistle) and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thess. 3:14). He is, indeed, ready to have further patience with him while the process of instruction seems to have any prospect of success, v. 15, but that such efforts cannot be continued indefinitely follows from the same Apostle's direction to Titus: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (chap. 3:10). Every word of the Bible must stand if there is to be unity of the spirit.

That Luther's insistence on accepting every word of Scripture must be held by all true believers is apparent, finally, from the *clearness* or *perspicuity* of Holy Scriptures. The definition given by Dr. A. L. Graebner (*Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*, 11 f.) is quoted elsewhere, but is purposely repeated *in toto* also in this connection: "The *perspicuity* of the Bible is that clearness of Holy Writ which renders all the doctrines and precepts laid down in the inspired Word

freely accessible to every reader or hearer of average human intelligence and sufficient knowledge of the language employed, and of a mind not in a manner preoccupied by error as to preclude the apprehension of the truths themselves, however clearly set forth in words of human speech." Let us analyze this definition in the light of the Scripture texts adduced by the author.

The Bible does make the claim that it is clear, that its various precepts and doctrines can, *caeteris paribus*, be grasped or understood with the mind or intellect (which is not identical with placing them within the reach of human reason or reasonable explanations). The Psalmist asserts, in a most unequivocal manner: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. . . . The entrance of Thy Word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps.119:105, 130). Cp. Is. 35:8d. Psalm 19:8 speaks in a similar strain: "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Christ says: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32). St. Peter writes of the word of prophecy that it is "a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19). In all these passages no distinction is made with regard to fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines or concerning statements of Scripture as to their being divisive and non-divisive of fellowship. The Lord simply says, in a general and comprehensive way, that His Word is clear enough to give understanding, not only to the learned and wise, but also to the unlearned, a person who has enough intelligence to understand the language used in Holy Writ. In other words, the objective clarity of Scripture is an attribute without which its divinity could not be maintained. At the same time it is true that no man can by nature, by his own reason or strength, have more than a linguistic and literalistic understanding of Holy Writ. The

perspicuity of Scripture gives us the assurance that the inspired account in itself, by virtue of the efficacy inherent in it through the power of the Holy Ghost, reveals to man its spiritual meaning and opens his understanding, and that without any further assistance of erudition or science. Luther rightly states: "In all the world there is no book which is clearer than the Bible." (Commentary on Psalm 37. St. Louis Ed., V:334.)

Dr. F. Pieper said in his paper on *Unionism* read at the Oregon and Washington District in 1924 (translation authorized by the District):

"God has so arranged the Bible that the whole Christian doctrine in all its parts is revealed in passages which contain nothing obscure, but are easily understood by learned and unlearned alike. Thanks to this arrangement of the Bible, all Christians are able to avoid false prophets, even when they come in sheep's clothing. Obscure passages are contained in the Bible, not that we should base our faith upon them, but to keep us from losing interest in the reading and studying of the Scriptures, as the ancient Church Fathers have truly said. In this connection others have said: 'We admit that all the Christian doctrines are revealed in clear passages of the Bible. But now these very clear passages are variously *interpreted* by the various churches.' This is the case, indeed. But for this reason our dear Savior teaches us not to base our faith on any *interpretation* of His Word, but on His Word *itself*. He says expressly: 'If ye continue in *My Word*, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,' free also from every human interpretation of His Word. The business of a true interpreter, or expositor, is not to make the words of Scripture clearer, but to *lead* them that hear or read *to these words* of Scripture and in case they have been turned away from them, *to lead them back* to

them, so they will base their faith upon the *naked* words of Scripture and on them *alone*. Every interpretation, even that of the best interpreter, is more obscure than the words of Scripture themselves, which is evident from the fact that every interpretation must be proved by the words of Scripture to ascertain whether it be correct. Although this is a self-evident truth, it is often *forgotten*. And this is the source of every error that has troubled the Church and torn it asunder. For this reason Luther, whom God sent to be the Reformer of the Church, called the Church back to the naked words of Scripture, *nuda Scriptura*, as he called it in Latin."

These facts do not, of course, render superfluous the most careful attention to the text, also the help of teachers who have a wider acquaintance with the Bible as a whole and in all its parts. Philip the Evangelist had a reason for asking the eunuch: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And the frankness of the Ethiopian officer is in keeping with the situation when he states: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:30 f.) The difficulty was not in the text, but in his ignorance of the circumstances under which the words of Isaiah 53 were written. The teaching of Philip simply speeded the process of learning, but the situation does not militate against the clarity of Holy Scriptures. That the study of the Bible demands intense application appears from the passages which contain the call "Whoso readeth, let him understand" (Matt. 24:15), and again, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things" (2 Tim. 2:7).

Any difficulty connected with the understanding of the Bible does not, then, lie in the text, but in human ignorance and lack of comprehension of spiritual insight (1 Cor. 2: 11-14). And, unfortunately, the human mind is often so preoccupied by error as to preclude the apprehension of the

divine truths themselves. St. Paul writes: "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. 4:3 f.). Jesus tells the unbelieving Jews: "Why do ye not understand My speech? Even because ye cannot hear My Word. . . . He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:43-47). And a very significant passage is that in 2 Pet. 3:15 f.: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

The fault lies not with the Word of God, but with the ignorance and perversity of man, who frequently, instead of taking his reason captive under the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), desires to be a master of the Holy Scriptures, understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm (1 Tim. 1:7). The fall of man has affected both his spiritual and his intellectual understanding and capacity, so that the Word of God, in itself intended for instruction, is frequently not correctly understood (Matt. 13:11; 6:22 f.; 1 John 1:6). Whatever passages in the Scriptures are "dark" are so because of the darkness that is in us, for even the enlightened Christian finds that his natural ignorance of spiritual things is a bad handicap in his study of the Bible.* Instead of speaking of the "darkness" of many passages of the Bible, we ought rather to make every effort to follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost in and through the Word, instead of permitting a preliminary or preconceived notion

* The "darkness," it is true, may sometimes be due to symbolic language or presentation, and the absence of Biblical reference to fulfillment.

or a primary false understanding to warp our spiritual judgment. If anywhere in the world, the virtue of humility is required in the study of Scripture. Luther's advice to all who are struggling with difficult passages of the Bible is that we do not place the blame on the Word of God, but just where it belongs: "That is indeed true, a few verses of the Bible are dark; but there is nothing else in them but what in other places is in the clear and open prooftexts. And yet heretics come along that they may expound the dark texts according to their own ideas and thereby would fight against the clear texts and the foundation of faith. . . . Therefore, if there is a dark text in the Bible, do not doubt that there is certainly the same truth behind it which in another place is clear, and he who cannot understand the dark, let him remain with that which is clear." (St. Louis Ed., V:334-338.)

It certainly is evident that with the quality of clearness or perspicuity of the Holy Scripture is associated the fact (touched upon also in another connection) that the words of the Holy Scripture should be understood as the obvious meaning of the context in each instance demands, the etymology of the word plus the usage of the author being the most important considerations. Luther puts the situation before us in his customary striking manner: "For I have often said that whoever will study in Holy Writ should always see to it that he should remain with the simple words, as much as ever he can, and do not remove therefrom unless some article of faith compel us to understand the words differently than they sound. For we must be certain of this fact that no simpler way of putting things has come on earth than what God has spoken." (On the Book of Genesis. St. Louis Ed., III:20.) On account of this conviction and attitude, Luther, in another place, makes the bold statement: "Anyone who has the audacity to explain the words

in the Scripture in another way than as they read, is under obligation to prove his point from the text at that particular point, or by an article of faith." (XX:781.) He made this a fundamental rule of interpretation. (Cp. XX:1003, § 274.)

The application of this obviously Scriptural rule is not very difficult. Let us take only a few examples, any of which will clearly show that aberrations from the clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures are due to rationalization in some form, an attempt to make Holy Writ conform to human reason. We have the well-known case of the word *ἑστίν* in the words of institution of the Sacrament. The controversy regarding this point of doctrine began early in the twenties of the sixteenth century, reached its climax at the Marburg Colloquy, and has ever since been a chief point of difference between the Reformed and the Lutheran Church. It was Zwingli's rationalizing that precipitated the crisis, and Protestantism has suffered ever since.

An old point of controversy concerns the word *yom* in Gen. 1:5 and all related passages. There can be no doubt as to the fundamental meaning of the word, a meaning which must always be considered in first place wherever the word occurs. It means, as the dictionaries have it, *dies civilis*, a day of twenty-four hours. Enemies of the Bible like H. H. Lane in his book *Evolution and Christian Faith* freely concede this meaning and even bring arguments in its favor. (E. g., p. 180.) His contention is, of course (and in this he is honest), that the Bible is wrong in its account of the creation story. Nowadays commentators prefer to rationalize by drawing false conclusions from the occasional use of the word *yom* to designate a different concept, as in Ezek. 13:5; Is. 2:12, in an attempt to force the Gen. 1 text into the same category. As stated above, this attempt is not new. Luther refers to it in his sermons on Genesis, when he writes: "Therefore, when Moses writes that God created heaven and

earth and all that is therein in six days, let it stand that these were six days, and you may not find an explanation (*Glosse*) as if six days had been one day. If you cannot grasp it that there were six days, then accord the Holy Ghost the honor that He is more learned than you are. For you are to deal with the Scripture in such a way that you have in mind: God Himself is speaking." (III:21.)

We find a good deal of rationalizing also with regard to Rom. 11:26, where we have the word *οὕτως*. There can be no doubt that the first, the ordinary meaning of the word is "thus, in this manner." Some dictionaries and grammars add the explanation that it indicates a conclusion drawn on the basis of the previous discussion. That being the case in keeping with the Greek idiom, the preceding phrase must be considered as being pertinent to the meaning "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." "And so," writes the Apostle, by this process namely, as the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, will all Israel, the sum total of the spiritual Israel, the total number chosen by God, not the descendants of Abraham *in toto* after the flesh, but the sum total of the true, the spiritual Israel, be saved. (Cp. *Lehre und Wehre*, "Der Rest Israel," June, 1925.) That is the clear statement of the Apostle's words, as they appear in the text. To translate the *οὕτως* with "then" is a form of rationalizing which is contrary to the plain demands associated with the clearness of Holy Writ.

The question might now be asked: What bearing has this discussion on the main topic under consideration, that of fellowship? Our answer may well be said to be contained in a series of propositions which Doctor Walther prepared for a conference in the late sixties of the last century. While the propositions deal with the difficulty of "Open Questions," they are very pertinent also to our present discussion:

"7. No person has the liberty and to no person may the liberty be given to believe and to teach otherwise than God has revealed in His Word, whether this concerns primary or secondary fundamental articles of faith, fundamental or non-fundamental doctrines, matters of doctrine or of life, historical data or things that are subject to the light of nature, important or apparently unimportant matters.

"8. The Church is obliged to take steps against all aberrations from the doctrine of the Word of God, whether such erring take place in the case of teachers or so-called laymen, on the part of individuals or entire church bodies.

"9. Those who stubbornly err from the Word of God are to be excluded from the Church.

"10. The fact that the Church Militant will never reach a higher than a fundamental degree of unity does not prove that any error against the Word of God in the Church may have equal rights with the truth or may be tolerated.

"14. To state that there are Christian doctrines contained as doctrines of the faith in Holy Scriptures which are not contained therein clearly, plainly, and unmistakably, and that these for that reason are to be reckoned with the open questions, is contrary to (*streitet wider*) the perspicuity and thereby against the purpose or the divinity of Holy Scripture, which claims to be the divine revelation.

"15. The modern theory that among the doctrines clearly revealed in the Word of God there are open questions is the most dangerous unionistic principle of our times, which will necessarily lead to skepticism and finally to naturalism."

These words are worthy of the most careful study by all who are honestly concerned about a God-pleasing unity in the Christian Church of these latter days.

CHAPTER II

Some Dialectical Premises

Teaching every man in all wisdom. COL. 1:28

THE Reformation of the Church by Martin Luther has rightly been called the Conservative Reformation as distinguished from the radical reforms of Zwingli and Calvin. In the polity and cultus of the Church and in the outward forms of Christianity Luther and his co-laborers retained what was not contrary to the Scriptures. They have been faulted ever since by radical reformers as having retained "the leaven of Romanism" in their restoration of the Apostolic Church.

For the present introductory thoughts to a discussion of the general topic of church fellowship we are concerned particularly with the wise discrimination by which the first generation of Lutheran teachers preserved what was useful in the presentation of dogma while discarding the medieval system. Scholasticism was a mixture of Aristotelian philosophy and the theology of the Latin fathers. It was not simply a union of reason and religion, but the combination of a specific philosophical system, the metaphysics of Aristotle, with the doctrines of the New Testament as understood by

Western tradition. Luther and his co-workers, in their back-to-the-Scriptures movement, discarded every tenet based on the speculation of Aristotle as handed down by St. Thomas and the later scholastics. They made a clean sweep of all these things. Above all, they vindicated the supremacy of Scripture and gave to reason only the position of a mental organ for the reception of the truth. We might say, *reason* as the determining factor was ruled out of theology and only the human *understanding* recognized as the avenue through which revealed truth is received by the mind.

Now, the conservative character of the Reformation was evident in the use which the theologians of the sixteenth and especially those of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century made of scholastic philosophy. They recognized in the logic of Aristotle and in the various types of argument described by him a valuable means of setting forth in a systematic manner the doctrines of the Church. There is no suggestion anywhere of re-introducing the scholastic use of reason as a means of establishing truth or of making rational the doctrines of the Church. The reign of Aristotle as a teacher of the Church had come to an abrupt end through the establishment of the principle of *sola Scriptura*. But if the dogmaticians shared Luther's aversion to the Stagirite as the "abominable heathen," they also shared Luther's appreciation for the work which Aristotle had done in analyzing the processes of human thought. To establish the various principles for the avoidance of fallacy and for clear argumentation, there has, indeed, never been a more potent aid than the treatises in which Aristotle discusses the definition, judgments, and syllogism. It will require the reading of only a few pages in Peter the Lombard's *Sentences* or in Thomas's *Summa* and the *Theologia Didactica Polemica* of Quenstedt to notice the complete disappearance of the Aristotelian metaphysics as a teaching of

the Church and also the retention of all that was valuable for the orderly and systematic presentation of the Christian doctrine.

There is one distinction in particular on which not only the later dogmaticians, but also the authors of the Formula of Concord depended for the effectiveness of their presentation as an appeal to the understanding both of friend and foe — the distinction between essence (substance) and accident. The distinction is taken directly from the thirteenth chapter of Aristotle's book *Of Interpretation*. In this chapter the doctrine of the relation between judgments is set forth. The philosopher points out that there may be judgments which refer to the essence of a thing, hence are always true and in every relation, while other judgments refer to that which is merely accidental. For instance, regarding man, the assertions that he is a creature and that he is two-legged would hold true regarding man essentially and at all times, while "shoemaker," "white," "good," "musical," would be accidental marks of the same concept, man. In other words, essential is that which belongs into the definition of a concept in itself, while accidental is that which may be true or may not be true in any given case or outward differentiation. There has never been a more fruitful distinction than this, and than its corollary, the distinction of matter and form, in all the writings of the philosophers, and none has been used more frequently by our dogmaticians. It is a distinction which more than any other, on the formal side, makes theological discussion luminous and helps avoid misunderstanding. The reader's attention is directed to a famous instance in the history of controversy. I refer to the argumentation on the question whether original sin is of the essence of man or is an accident.

The example is taken from the First Article of the Formula of Concord and will be found both in the Brief Summary and in the Thorough Declaration.

This article, entitled "Of Original Sin," records one of the tragedies in the history of doctrine. It was occasioned by the Flacian controversy. Matthias Flacius, the father of modern scientific church history, immortal author of the Magdeburg *Centuriae*, in which the rise of Antichrist through the medieval centuries was described on the basis of primary sources, was one of the greatest leaders of the Lutheran Reformation. He was what Dr. Bente calls him in his "Introduction" to the Symbolical Books, "the most faithful, devoted, stanch, zealous, and able exponent and defender of genuine Lutheranism." But he departed from the sound doctrine in the doctrine of original sin, stating that it belongs to the essence of man and is not an accident. The entire discussion of the controversy by Dr. Bente is highly illuminating.* The Formula of Concord warns the theologians against the use of the Latin terms *substantia* and *accidens* in addressing the ordinary simple people, but defends the use of these terms "in the schools, among the learned," "because they are well known and used without any misunderstanding, to distinguish exactly between the essence of a thing and what attaches to it in an accidental way." The authors of the Formula stress the fact that the distinction between substance and accident is not the same as the distinction between importance and unimportance. A thing or quality may be "an accident" and still be decisive in our judgment regarding the thing which it describes. The

* In his discussion of this controversy, Dr. Bente quotes Melancthon's definition of the terms *substance* and *accident* as follows: "Substance is something which in reality has a being of its own and is not in another as having its being from the subject." "Accident is something which does not exist as such nor is a part of the substance, but is changeable in something else." As examples of accident Melancthon mentions the following: In the case of water, coldness; in the case of mind, knowledge; of the essence of fire is heat; of the essence of water, humidity. He concludes: Whatever is present or absent without changing the nature of a thing is an accident (is accidental).

Formula emphasizes the damnable nature of original sin although it is "accidental" to human nature, that is, not of its essence. The section on page 879 of the *Concordia Tri-glossa* should be read in its connection. We notice in this entire discussion that the term *essence* is used as synonymous with substance; and that "accidental" has nothing whatever to do with "casual" or "by chance," but is used for a thing or quality which may be present or absent without affecting the inner nature or real essence of that thing or action in which it inheres.

The time will never come when theologians who wish to be exact in their thinking can overlook the distinction which we are discussing. Neither can the lawyer, the physician, the businessman, nor the housewife who desire to do clear thinking.* The dualism of substance and accident is a discovery of Aristotle's, not an invention. He has simply stated one of the laws which the Creator has laid into the human mind and by which it must operate if it is to operate at all. Fundamentally it is a matter of stating correctly the nature of an action or of a thing. Consider the idea of "money." When the merchant offers in exchange for my five dollars on a two-dollar purchase two dollar bills and

* An example just comes to hand in a recent book, *The Crisis of Our Age*, by Professor P. A. Sorokin, head of the Sociology Department at Harvard. He says (p. 244), analyzing the merits of contemporary science: "Ask how it defines man. The current answers are, as we have seen, that man is a variety of electron-proton complex; or an animal closely related to the ape or monkey; or a reflex mechanism; or a variety of stimulus-response relationships; or a psychoanalytical bag filled either by libido or basic physiological drives; or a mechanism controlled mainly by digestive and economic needs. Such are the current physicochemical, biological, and psychosocial conceptions of man. No doubt man is all [?] these things. But do any or all of these conceptions completely explain the *essential nature* of man? Do they touch his most *fundamental properties* which make him a creature unique in the world?"

an assorted lot of silver, the essential thing is the three dollars, not the denominations of the paper money or coins which sum up to three dollars. On the other hand, when we define "legal tender," we have a different concept. It belongs to the essence of American legal tender that silver coins in smaller denominations than a dollar are not legal tender in sums exceeding ten dollars. Here the denomination is not an accident, but belongs to the substance. All concepts, whether they stand for things, institutions, or actions, come under the same principle. The *New Testament ministry* is an institution of which the acceptance of a call properly extended by a congregation is essential; ordination, on the other hand, is accidental. It may be present or lacking without affecting the institution. In *prayer*, as a genus, the communication of a believer's soul with God is of the essence; so is the offering of prayer "for Christ's sake," whether that be expressed in words or not; while it is not of the essence but accidental whether a prayer be spoken in English or Latin and whether it be petition or praise.

One of the subtle dangers which attend the conduct of theological controversy is the mistaking of words for things, of words for institutions. No one who has read Luther and the older dogmaticians of our Church is in great danger to confound names with things or institutions. But Luther is read very little and the dogmaticians not at all. It might be well to read again the entire Book of Concord and note the care with which things and words are differentiated. In the discussion of theological doctrines we deal with things, institutions, actions, and while the words which we use to describe these concepts are of great importance, it will prove ruinous to all sound thinking and sensible discussion to place the essence of an *idea* in the Latin, German, or English *vocable* by which it is expressed. Again, we avoid this fallacy by keeping in mind the distinction between essence and

accident. Let us say we are dealing with the principle of the *separation of Church and State*. Lately a group of women raised their voices in protest against purchasing War Bonds from the ladies' aid treasury because that would be "mixing Church and State." I don't know how the pastor finally convinced his ladies that such a purchase would be proper. He certainly would not try to explain to a group which the Formula of Concord would classify with the *simplices* the "essence" and the "accident" of the separation of Church and State. Yet essentially this is just what he did if he made the matter clear at all. He would point out, for instance, that the money in a ladies' aid treasury is not the Church, the treasury is not the Church, the ladies' aid society is not the Church. No one could deny any of these propositions. Again he would say: United States War Bonds are not the State since they are issued by the State and certainly a thing cannot be issued by itself. If you state this a little more simply than given for the sake of brevity above, you will have the unhesitating consent of every thinking person who knows what the ideas mean which are behind the words *church*, *state*. And there would be the end of it so far as rational argument is concerned. The opposition might not cease, but that opposition would then be revealed as not coming from the understanding, but from some other source, possibly from the emotions, from prejudice, or from a settled program of opposition to the minister. It may be that the minister will, in view of such personal or emotional background, refrain from pushing the project. His reason again will tell him that it is not of the essence of *patriotism* whether just this amount from that treasury be invested in War Bonds. Again, the clear comprehension of what is essential and what is accidental in a certain situation helps decide what is the proper thing to do.

But transfer this to a pastoral conference. Is it not clear

that when the emotions, prejudices, and personal antagonisms are not permitted to interfere with clear judgment; if, above all, we are not going to insist upon construing the *words* of a brother with whom we differ when his thoughts have been made sufficiently clear, no acrimonious differences can arise? There may be things which we, owing to the human factor, can never settle in conferences (or even outside conferences). But the sincere effort on the part of all concerned to see what is essential to the thing being discussed and what belongs to its accidental features will in itself result in a unity so desirable for co-operation in church work.

However, there is a further distinction observed by the older teachers of our Church which supplied a powerful aid towards clear thinking and exact definitions. This is the distinction derived not from the dialectics of Greek philosophy, but from its metaphysics. I refer to the distinction between matter and form. This is likewise a universal principle, not identified with any particular philosophical belief, but inherent in the nature of things and of institutions. A clear understanding of its use in the older dogmatics is able to furnish the sword which cuts the Gordian knot of many a theological difference. It is certainly worth being called to mind as we approach the question of *church fellowship*. It is said that eleven speakers voicing their thoughts about prayer fellowship at a recent convention expressed no less than thirteen opinions. Also a certain emotionalism has been manifested in the discussion of this subject, and the personal note has not been absent. It cannot harm a good cause when those interested in it will ask themselves whether the concepts with which they are dealing have any reality attached to them or whether they are working with ideas in a vacuum. This, in a sense, is the distinction of essence and accident but viewed from a different angle. In a way, we

are now extending our research a little further into the region of abstract thought. Having established in a given case what is the essence of a thing, an institution, or an action, when it has been divested of everything accidental, we now scrutinize this concept with which we are dealing and ask: *Does any objective reality correspond to it?* (By objective we mean, outside the thinking which goes on in my brain.) Is there a way of absolutely fixing the *reality* of the thing, institution, or action which is the subject of discussion? There is, if we are willing to apply the criterion which occurs in every chapter, one is tempted to say, on every page, of the theologians on whom the structure of dogmatics as taught during the first two generations of Missouri Synod pastors was built up.

It is again an extremely simple thing. Once train even a lay Christian not to shy at a few Latin words — he gets plenty of them in business, in banking, in politics — and even he, if he is really interested in the clear definition of doctrine, may be made to see the value and the beauty of the distinction between matter and form.

Really, the only difficulties to be met in this doctrine of matter and form are difficulties due to language. The word *matter* seems to imply corporeity, or having a physical body, like an animal, a tree, a clock. The word does not mean that here. The central idea in the distinction here being considered is the idea of *change*, of *becoming*. Matter is the same as *potentiality of change*, the possibility of either being or not being. One might also say that matter is the substratum of change. When the potential becomes actual, it is only another way of saying that *matter* has taken on *form*. Hence timbers, bricks, and mortar are potentially a house. This reality, house, is the realization of a purpose represented by the finished house. By a short cut in thinking our dogmaticians have sometimes identified form simply with

cause or *purpose*, since it is the purpose which makes the potential real.

Let us review some of the phrasings of this principle in the literature of our older dogmaticians. Nicolaus Hunnius says: "Form is the internal cause by reason of which a thing is that which it is. In other words, it is that which gives reality to a thing." Balthasar Meissner: "The formal cause denotes that which gives a thing its specific reality (*quidditas*); it is the cause by reason of which a thing is that particular thing which it is." Gottfried Scharff: "Form is the internal cause by which a thing is made to have its own being."

This terminology is constantly repeated in the doctrinal writings of the fathers. It occurs in every definition of the handbook of doctrine by Baier, whose *Compendium of Positive Theology* was republished by Dr. Walther for the use of his classes and on which for more than fifty years all the graduates of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis were trained in their theological thinking. Consider a few examples and observe how luminous our doctrinal definitions become by the application of this principle.*

Before we proceed to these, however, I shall present a few examples from quite unrelated fields of human thought. They may help some readers overcome their fears that I am pleading for some special technique of systematic theology. My first example would be that of a *material thing*; say, a bronze ingot. Now, this unshaped mass of bronze is potentially a cannon, a coil of wire, a statue. Once more, the statue is potentially a monument, or it may be an idol. In each case we note that the purpose residing in the thing makes it what it is. The *causa formalis* of the cannon would be its use as a piece of artillery. And so on. Next consider an *institution*, let us say, a police force. The material prin-

* See Gal. 4:19 μορφωθῆναι — Christ made real in the believer. Also Wesley's "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," v. 4.

ciple would be the organization of men; the formal principle, the end which the organization is to serve. An organization of men is potentially an orchestra, a lodge of Freemasons, a bowling club, a Lutheran congregation, a police force. What determines the reality "police force" as differentiated from any other form which the organization could have taken is the end served — this group is appointed to preserve law and order. This makes the police force what it is. And now *an act*: A man fires a rifle and kills a man. Potentially, this is a murder, an accident during a hunt, an execution under a court martial. It is the purpose and nothing else that determines the particular nature of the act — not the purpose in the mind of the actor, of course, but the inner quality inherent in the act by which it differs from all others. We note, by the way, that the principle "the end justifies the means" is not an application, but a perversion of this principle. Similarly, the Roman Catholic doctrine that the "intention" of the priest makes the Sacrament is a perversion of the law that "the purpose makes the essence of the act" — (as if it were the purpose of the one who by accident happens to perform the act). In the case of the Sacraments it is the purpose inherent in the sacred act that makes it a Sacrament, as already stated.

But let us look a little more closely at the precise manner, under this *matter-and-form aspect*, of stating the *essence* of our doctrine of the Sacraments. In the case of the Lord's Supper the *materia* is the eating of bread and the drinking of wine. The *formal cause*, according to Baier, quoting his predecessors, are the Lord's words of institution. These make of the meal a Sacrament. To the eating of bread and the drinking of wine comes the divine ordinance, so that in, with, and under the visible elements the communicant receives the body and the blood of Christ. This is the *essence* of the Sacrament, all else is *accidental* — the faith of the

celebrant and of the communicant, the nature of the grain used in the preparation of the bread, its fermented or unfermented condition, the language of the celebration, the place, the time. How clearly circumscribed it all is! How well defined against possible misunderstanding!

In Baptism the *causa materialis*, said the old teachers, is the act of applying water to a person. This, potentially, is an act of cleansing, an act of cooling, an act of some symbolical or ceremonial meaning, or the Sacrament of Baptism. If the last mentioned, what makes it so? The words of institution. They are the *causa formalis*, as giving *essence* to what was an undefined, potential this or that. Once more, all else is *accident* — the kind or amount of water; immersion, sprinkling, aspersion; the faith of the celebrant; the language, place, and time of the act. Here, too, it becomes important to remember that we are not dealing with words, but with ideas. We do not accept Baptism by a Unitarian, because he has not the *essence* of the *causa formalis*, the words of institution — though he has the sound of the words — in their reference to a Trinity, which the Unitarian denies.*

It would be a simple matter to apply this principle to certain concepts with which we deal when discussing the problem of church fellowship; for instance, the ideas "congregation," "joint worship," "prayer fellowship," "unionism." But to take these matters up in the present chapter would be anticipating. They will be considered in their proper order in a later section.

As we close this chapter, the reminder is in place that we are making neither the dialectics of the dogmaticians nor the metaphysics under which they viewed the world a *principle* by which Christian doctrine is being fixed. Neither the

* For other examples in our dogmatic literature, see A. L. Graebner, *Doctrinal Theology*, §§ 87, 88, 91. Stoeckhardt, *Brief an die Roemer*, p. 439. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, I, p. 241; II, 545. Hoenecke, *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik*, II, 345, 399.

fathers of our Synod nor the older dogmaticians entertained the idea of establishing the correctness of their doctrine by an appeal to reason. What the distinction of essence (substance), accident, and the determination of any given essence through the principle of matter and form does for theology is that by using those distinctions *we employ the understanding (to which all doctrine is directed) according to those laws which the Creator has laid into the human mind*. The Formula of Concord insists on these distinctions in order that "strife about words might be avoided" (*Triglotta*, p. 875, 51). It regards the proper definition of substance as "an indubitable and indisputable axiom in theology" (p. 877, 55); indeed, it says that this principle of essence and accident is of so universal application, is so "immovable" a truth that "no truly intelligent man has ever had any doubts concerning it." I am quoting the English translation in the *Triglotta* — the Latin is even stronger: "No one who is of a sane mind (*sana mens*) has ever doubted it." Furthermore, the Confessions hold that "permanent peace" in this controversy (on original sin) depends upon removing any doubt regarding this same distinction (p. 879, 58).

The terms in themselves are, of course, unessential for our present purpose. We may even leave the use of them to professional dogmaticians and insist only on two things: That when we speak of church fellowship or of any matter related to this subject, we must be absolutely sure that we are all *speaking of the same thing* and that this thing is *properly defined* as to its true nature. In the second place, we are going to insist that this discussion revolve *around ideas, concepts, and not around words*. In order that these two conditions of any satisfactory discussion may be preserved, we shall not hesitate to use, upon occasion, also in our age, the time-tested procedure *juxta regulas dialecticae* (*Triglotta*, p. 876, 56).

CHAPTER III

The Limitations of Reason in Apprehending the Truth of Scripture

Thy judgments are a great deep. PS. 36:6

THE dividing line between rationalism and Christian faith is easily drawn. Rationalism makes reason the principle of knowledge in matters of religion. Accordingly, it will claim for itself the right to decide whether there may be three Persons in the one divine Essence; whether two natures may be united in the Person of Christ; whether righteousness may be imputed; whether miracles can happen; whether there are states of happiness and of misery in the hereafter. Such reasoning rests on the false assumption that common human sense experience exhausts the entire content of reality. Fundamentally, its basis is naturalism, the denial of the supernatural. It is the traditional position of the infidel.

The principle opposed to this is that of the authority of Scripture. In our teaching and practice we act upon the conviction that the Bible is the Word of God and that it is

inerrant, not in matters of faith and morals only, but also in the field of history and nature. We furthermore believe that regarding all articles of the Christian faith the Scriptures have spoken so plainly that we are able to understand what the Holy Spirit will have us believe. Indeed, our position is that the Bible is so clear in all matters concerning God's will and the way of salvation that there is no excuse for misunderstanding.

It is the manner in which the understanding operates in the presence of the divine Word that we shall now discuss. While seemingly an abstract question, or at least remote from the practical affairs of church life, I hope to show, before the end of this chapter is reached, that a clear conception of what is meant by "understanding" the teachings of Scripture will be very helpful in the discussion of a number of questions related to the church-fellowship problem.

Of the Scripture we say that it has the quality of *perspicuity*, defined thus in the *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology* by A. L. Graebner: "The perspicuity of the Bible is that clearness of Holy Writ which renders all the doctrines and precepts laid down in the inspired Word freely accessible to every reader or hearer of average human intelligence and sufficient knowledge of the languages employed." On the human side, therefore, what is needed is first of all "average human intelligence." This term we interpret to mean that our understanding operates also in its enfeebled state after the Fall according to certain laws which the Creator laid into the mind when He made it, as He laid certain laws like gravitation, conservation of energy, etc., into physical nature when it was made. When we say that the Bible is written for our understanding, it means that the inspired writers wrote in terms of average, normal human understanding. Conversely, the human mind has the ability to apprehend what the Holy Scriptures teach. The Apostle

Paul writes: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures" (2 Tim. 3:15). Countless texts could be quoted to the same effect. No one, of course, will undertake to defend the proposition that the Bible answers every question which may be raised, let us say, regarding the history of the Jewish people or of the early Church or of Old and New Testament institutions, also regarding the doctrines and principles with which revelation deals. Not everything is revealed to us regarding the supernatural. "We see through a glass, darkly; we know in part" (1 Cor. 13:12). There are mysteries of the faith, sometimes called, as in Dr. Pieper's *Dogmatik*, "problems of theology," concerning which we are not able to make any clear picture in our mind. Scripture simply reveals the facts. The generation of the Son by the Father and the spiration of the Holy Ghost by Father and Son are clearly revealed, yet utterly mysterious. In the doctrine of predestination we acknowledge an insoluble mystery in the difference in the outcome when divine grace is universal and also human depravity is universal. But while our reason is unable to *comprehend* these doctrines, it is still able to *apprehend* them, that is, it is able to *appropriate* the doctrine and is able also to define the mysteries involved. Furthermore, even in these profound mysteries of revelation, as in the historical portions of the Bible, we believe that the sacred text contains no contradictions. God does not propose for our acceptance contradictory statements (of which one must be false if the other is true) — which is only another way of saying that the Bible in all its statements is inerrantly true. Reason cannot sit in judgment on the truthfulness of Scripture, and when we speak of the *understanding* apprehending what God says to us in His Word, we mean simply the avenue by which its messages enter the human mind. "I have

given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have *received* them and have *known* surely that I came out from Thee" (John 17:8); "*Receive* with meekness the ingrafted Word" (James 1:2). Saving faith accepts the benefits of Christ offered through the means of grace. But saving faith ordinarily presupposes the knowledge of the teachings of the Gospel and therefore includes an act of the understanding. (We recognize the exception of the saving faith in the hearts of *infants* engendered by the Spirit through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.)

In apprehending the truths of Scripture we are using our mind, basically, as we use it in receiving any other element of knowledge. The conviction that these doctrines are *true*, that the death of Jesus atoned for the world's sin, that He is my personal Savior, is a supernatural gift, being the work of the Holy Spirit. But the channel through which the Holy Spirit reaches my heart and soul is the understanding. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14.)

Now, it is interesting to observe that all the powers of appropriation, induction, deduction, inference, of which the human mind is capable, are employed in this act of apprehending what the Bible offers for acceptance to our mind. Whether directly perceived or indirectly attained by logical deduction, etc., the doctrines of the faith, as accepted and confessed, are the true basis of Christian fellowship. Denial of such doctrines cannot occur without involving the guilt of rejecting divine truth and, if persisted in, causing divisions in the Church. For our present purpose it is important to note that not only doctrines contained in *so many words* in the Old and New Testament text, but every truth derived from the text by a valid inference carries with it the same confessional obligation.

The Bible, in its general teachings regarding God, sin,

grace, is such a clear book that there is substantial agreement concerning its teachings both on the part of those who accept and those who reject. Also modernistic commentaries as a rule represent quite correctly the doctrine of justification or predestination, though they treat these doctrines simply as opinions of the Apostle Paul. The *International Critical Commentary* even in its discussion of the ninth chapter in Romans sets forth the Lutheran doctrine as opposed to the Calvinistic interpretation, which suggests itself to the superficial reading of verse 18 (*International Critical Commentary*, p. 258). It was an observation of Dr. Pieper's that it is the mediating theologian who goes wrong in exegesis while the out-and-out radical has no interest in establishing any doctrinal position and for this reason very often sets forth the meaning of the sacred text with surprising insight. The difference between him and us, Dr. Pieper would remark, is not that we differ in our interpretation, but that *we* regard the Scripture as the Word of God while the unbelieving critic recognizes no authority in the Scriptures at all and regards its teachings as the outmoded ideas of some Jews who lived two thousand years ago. Without the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit it is impossible to have a saving knowledge of these truths. But also the regenerating power of God's Spirit addresses itself to rational man — not, we repeat, to his reason, as if seeking its approval, but to his understanding, which apprehends revealed truth.

But let us return to the point to which our attention has already briefly been directed. Between the doctrines directly stated in Scripture and those apprehended by a process of induction or deduction there is no difference whatsoever as regards their validity. To this we now add the observation that a distinction has correctly been made between *direct conclusions* from a comparison of Scriptural texts and the

more remote *inferences* based on the direct and clear teachings of the Scriptures. An analysis of the various means by which our understanding apprehends the doctrines of revelation is here in place. In mentally appropriating what the Spirit teaches us in the Bible we use every avenue by which the mind can receive knowledge. In the first place, there is *direct contemplation*, by which knowledge is simply transferred, statement by statement, from the Word of God into the receiving mind. When Moses speaks to Israel (Deut. 4:35), "The Lord, He is God; there is none else beside Him" or (Deut. 6:4), "The Lord our God is one Lord," no inference is necessary. There is the plain assertion of God's unity. Similarly when Paul says (Eph. 1:23) that God "fillet all in all" or when the Psalmist (Ps. 90:2) declares God to be "from everlasting to everlasting," the infinity of God is declared in so many words, and the most our dogmatics can do is to use such terms as "infinity," "omnipresence," "eternity," to describe the attributes of God expressed in these verses. Likewise it is by simple intuition (*Anschauung*) that we receive from the word of inspiration the doctrines of the atonement, of objective justification, of conversion by the Holy Spirit, of the inspiration of Scripture, of a blessed immortality, and of eternal punishment. This holds good not only with reference to the great fundamental doctrines, but regarding many non-fundamental teachings. The existence of angels, the nature of their occupation, their holiness; the doctrine of Adam's imputed guilt; the duties of the pastoral office — are all stated in such simple language that they are clear to the understanding without any process of deduction. This factor must be kept in mind when we discuss the relation of agreement in non-fundamentals to the subject of church fellowship. Certainly, one who should stubbornly deny even such a teaching as the existence of evil spirits could not be our brother — not because the existence of

evil spirits is a teaching necessary to salvation, but because it is so clearly taught that by denial we would express our disbelief in hundreds of Bible texts so clear that without calling for any deductive process they acquaint us with the fact of the existence of evil spirits. When our fathers asserted that disagreement in non-fundamentals "need not always and at once be divisive of fellowship," they never dreamed of tolerating denial of any doctrine, important or not, clearly set forth in Scripture.

Among the clear doctrines we reckon also those which we gain by a comparison of a number of texts from which a certain teaching is derived by *induction*. The doctrine of the Trinity is not set forth *ex professo* anywhere in the Scriptures. But there are a multitude of texts which refer to the three Persons in God as separate Persons (Is. 48:16; John 14:15-17; Matt. 28:19). Comparing a number of such texts, we find that the Persons are strictly co-ordinate, and other texts disclose the fact that each of the Persons is divine. The conclusion is inescapable that the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the One Supreme Being. In the same manner the communication of attributes, by which the human nature in Christ shares the attributes of the divine, is established, for instance, the man Christ's omniscience. Similarly, scattered through the Old and New Testaments we have references to the divine image. We gather these various statements, we set down in terms of human speech their common or joint meaning, and we have the dogma of the image of God, its loss, its restitution. The terms objective and subjective justification occur nowhere in Scripture, but the teaching that God justified all men when He raised Jesus from the dead is taught in Rom. 5:19 and elsewhere, while the truth that by faith in the merits of the Redeemer we are justified is taught as clearly in other texts. Yet there are not two justifications, but one justifying act, which we

treat under two dogmatical heads, as objective (general) and subjective (individual) justification. These two aspects make up the complete doctrine, and we receive it by a simple impression of the inspired word upon our understanding. See also, for example, Hoenecke, *op. cit.*, III, 206.

We might group with these teachings the large number which consists simply in the *enumeration* of items derived from the comparison of a number of doctrines. Hence our teaching that there are two Sacraments; that there are two kinds of angels; that there will be a twofold resurrection; that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son; that there are two grounds for a divorce recognized as valid by the Church — adultery and desertion; and many more.

A third group of doctrines is made up of those which we derive by *deduction* from words of Scripture. Here the simplest examples would be those depending on a *direct inference*. If Jesus is the Son of Mary, it follows that, since He is true God, Mary is the mother of God. If the Latter Days as described in the Old and New Testaments are days of suffering and persecution for the Church, they cannot be days of glory and earthly power; this excludes a millennium as preceding the Second Advent and end of the world. The point I am trying to make is this, that a truth arrived at by such deduction is just as valid as if the Scripture contained it in so many words. Our Savior uses logical deduction to proclaim the teachings of His kingdom. In His demonstration of Himself to the Jews as the Messiah and the Son of God (John 10:34-36), He leads His hearers by a simple deduction to form the inevitable conclusion. The truth that the law of the Sabbath had not been transgressed by His disciples when they were hungry is proved by a reference to the act of David and the custom of the priesthood (Matt. 12:3-5). Similarly the obligation of the marriage bond is

demonstrated (Matt. 19:3-8). Paul uses with great freedom both the reasoning from direct inference and also the types of argumentation which we call syllogistic. The fundamental principle of reasoning which we call the law of identity (that a thing is identical with itself) is the basis of his argument Rom. 11:6. The argument *a fortiori* is frequently met with in his discussions of the doctrines of salvation, never more powerfully than in the fifth chapter of Romans (see the "much more then" verses 9, 10, 17; the entire chapter). In this chapter the truth that all men die by imputation of Adam's guilt is demonstrated from the fact that death carried away humanity also before the Mosaic Law was given, when men had not sinned against a promulgated Law — one should consult the commentaries to understand the tremendous power of the argument. Similarly, the demonstration of the doctrine of free grace and of justification by faith, in Galatians, is supported by the same kind of reasoning through which the sinner is deprived successively of every ground of hope for salvation derived from his own merits, so that in the end he is compelled either to acknowledge himself a sinner and accept the redemption of Christ or reject the grace of God and face eternal damnation. The doctrine is never formulated in such precise terms, but the argument of Galatians permits absolutely no other understanding of what Paul intends to teach. It is the either-or — of acceptance or rejection, so that we have a right to say indeed that there are only two religions, the religion of works and the religion of faith, and that man's eternal choice rests between the two — and what is this but the principle of excluded middle by which the human mind works so long as it is sane?

By these methods reason apprehends the truth of Scripture. What we mean to say is that regardless of whether a person has living faith or not, whether he accepts or

denies, a simple reading of the Scriptures compels him to recognize in the doctrinal propositions mentioned above correct expressions of the teachings of Scripture.

We make no difference between doctrines directly stated in Scripture as that of the states of Christ, and those deduced from it, like that of the right to serve in just wars. The latter type of statement is equally valid with the former because based on the truth that the teachings of Scripture are there, to be apprehended by the human faculty of knowledge. This is the major premise of every doctrinal statement. Unless intended to be understood, the Scriptures would not be written. This we mean when we say that the Holy Scriptures are *clear*. Only because of this fundamental fact are we able to establish a man's disagreement with Scripture as guilt. Only because of this fact have we definite principles of Christian fellowship. And if we acknowledge the Christianity of some who depart from the Scripture, it is because of some happy inconsistency which permits them to retain the fundamentals while by their rejection of other truths they are really subverting the foundation upon which saving doctrine rests, the authority of the Bible.

Moreover, our fathers did not overlook the difficulty of apprehension as a factor which must be considered in controversy. When Dr. Walther proposed his theses of 1868 on the subject of open questions (*Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 14, 1868, p. 318 f.), he said (Thesis 4): "A Christian may be so simple-minded that he cannot be convinced of the unscripturalness even of an error in a fundamental doctrine of the secondary type. It may be that he entertains this error and continues in it without being necessarily excluded by the orthodox Church." Writing in *Lehre und Wehre* the same year (April issue), he refers to the consideration which should be shown to those who "hold on to error evidently

by reason of weakness of understanding or lack of comprehension." Such, he says, are to be borne with. In arguing with Dr. Fritschel, Dr. Walther (*Colloquium*, p. 79) declared that he cannot regard the conversion of the Jews as an "open question" in the sense as though anyone can think of it as he pleases because it is not yet decided (the original Iowa position). But he added, "Das gebe ich zu, dass darueber auch unter Rechtgläubigen eine Differenz sein kann, denn so klar steht sie nicht in Gottes Wort, dass ich sagen kann: wer es nicht glaubt, der glaubt auch nicht an Gottes Wort. *Es gehoert eine ganze Reihe Schluesse dazu, um zur Klarheit darueber zu gelangen*, und vielleicht kommt man noch zu einer naeheren Erklaerung durch die Erfuellung. Die betreffenden Stellen sind eben Weissagungen; also kann auch niemand mit absoluter Gewissheit sagen, dass er ihren rechten Verstand getroffen habe" — although Walther would definitely have the chiliastic interpretation excluded. Guenther in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1876, quotes Kromayer for the proposition that the "degrees of evidential force" (*Grade der Evidenz*) should be taken into account when discussing doctrinal differences with an opponent.

In this connection we shall not overlook the fact that in some points our church practice rests upon deductions strung out over quite a series of syllogisms. We may cite as an instance the doctrine of the nature of the call, the absence of any limitations as to time. It is arrived at through a deduction from those texts which declare that the minister is called by the Lord of the Church, who however uses the congregation to call a certain person to a certain pastorate. From this it is concluded that the Lord Himself will indicate the time when the minister is to leave his charge and labor in another station. There is, of course, no text which expressly says that the ministerial call should be unlimited as to time, and the deduction is rather remote

and involves, as everyone knows, some uncertainties. Hence it is not surprising that the principle, though valid, is carried out with little consistency in the Lutheran Church. In our Synod, teachers (like ministers) have an unlimited call — that is, if they are men, not if they are women. Professors have an unlimited call, but assistant professors do not. At that, also regular professors have occasionally been called for a limited time. The call of mission secretaries is unlimited, as is that of school superintendent; while the President's call is limited. The calls of candidates may be limited (for a year, two years, etc.), until they are ordained — when the tenure is unlimited — except in mission stations, when the mission board may make a transfer, etc. It is clear that the doctrine of the unlimited nature of the call is not a teaching on which fellowship can be made to depend. The Scriptures have given leeway here for practice according to circumstances, the Church being governed in such matters by a sanctified common sense. The practice in vogue in our Synod conforms to the following pattern: unlimited tenure in the case of such men as have been both trained for the full office and called to exercise all the functions of the office in the pastorate; limited or temporary tenure in the case of such as may be trained for the full office or not, but exercise only a part or an auxiliary function of the office. The transfer of the unlimited tenure to auxiliary offices such as parish school teachers and professors of our institutions seems to be due to the fact that they are working primarily in the Word and doctrine and thus partake of the privilege accorded to the incumbents of the entire office. In the case of all men holding *teaching* positions, certain conditions laid down by State authorities may also limit the tenure of office. (See on this entire matter *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Volume III, p. 23 ff. Also *Proceedings*, South Dakota District, 1928, and Northern

Nebraska District, 1934, special pamphlet.) This is also the case in the application of the principle that a congregation may delegate its power to an individual or a group when calling a minister. The principle asserted by the Lutheran Church from its earliest times that the call may be conferred by delegated powers, makes it possible for congregations to confer this power of calling ministers upon an individual (superintendent, bishop) or on a group (consistory, presbytery), and our Confessions do not call such a vocation invalid. Luther was willing to accept even bishops having temporal powers besides their spiritual jurisdiction.

Where, then, do the *limitations* of our faculty of understanding appear? Unquestionably the principle will be found valid that our conviction of truth is in proportion to the *directness* of our apprehension. The more direct the path to our understanding, the more immediate and certain the acceptance of a truth. Conviction becomes less certain in proportion as a larger number of factors must be considered when permitting our mind to arrive at conclusions. The less direct the *line of proof* for a theological proposition and the less certain the *data* of experience with which our induction works, the less certain will be the conclusions of the inferences which we draw. This holds good particularly when a very general principle is made the basis of judgments or when application is made to cases of a complex or unusual nature, especially as we give our attention to principles of *life* (whether of the individual or of the Church), as distinguished from the doctrines of the *faith* (to use Dr. Walther's language, the *Glaubenslehren*) which we have been considering. When this difference is clearly perceived, we shall be able to make certain inferences regarding the agreement between church bodies to be demanded as necessary for fellowship or, conversely, the right of disagreement between brethren.

1. Some of the limitations under which we labor are due to certain difficulties, recognized by all interpreters, which are inherent in the text. No one will say that the chronology of the Old Testament is a simple matter. Sometimes the versions into the vernacular have created difficulties not inherent in the text (as in 2 Chron. 15:19; 16:1). But there are real problems here (as in the dating of the accession of Jehoash of Israel). Then there are the details in certain parables (the oil and lamps of the ten virgins); proverbial sayings like the "eye of a needle" (Mark 10:25); problems of punctuation and construction as in Mark 7:19; the two genealogies of our Lord; the exact meaning of 1 Pet. 3:19, on which Luther's comment was: "This I don't understand, and no one has ever interpreted it." One need not be a constant reader of Martin Luther to know that his writings abound in expressions which grant freedom in the field of exegesis: "I will permit each to decide this as he pleases"; "This point I leave to the grammarians"; "You may think as you please about this"; and frequently, with something of a humorous twist, "This I leave to the learned heads." When the New Testament itself indicates the fulfillment of an Old Testament word of prophecy, such interpretations belong to the certainties of our faith. But much of the prophecy concerned with the Latter Days involves difficulties of interpretation, so that we have, *e. g.*, at least two systems of interpreting the Book of Revelation and much additional disagreement as to the meaning of the various symbols and incidents. We believe that Luther and his reformatory work is predicted in chapter 14:6 ff., but we cannot demand universal agreement to this interpretation. In all matters referred to we have the principle that whatever your interpretation, it must not contradict the clear texts. "Problems of the Faith" were discussed by the Eastern District (Missouri Synod) in 1868. Regarding the bearing of Josh. 10:12 on the Copernican

theory it was declared that this was not an article of the faith, but a problem "which will probably not be solved before Judgment Day. It is possible to disagree with some point (man kann wohl etwas leugnen) in those doctrines which do not stand in organic connection with the body of Scriptural doctrine (Lehrgebaeude heil. Schrift) so long as one has not understood that it is revealed in Scripture. But as soon as this is acknowledged, its denial would mean rejection of the Bible." Regarding the dark texts in the Bible, Dr. C. F. W. Walther said in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, "Some passages in Holy Writ are more or less obscure, *e. g.*, passages with historical, archaeological, geographical, chronological, ethnological, genealogical, and onomastic difficulties or prophecies whose correct solution will be necessary and possible only when they have been fulfilled. . . . On these points the readers and exegetes of the Bible cannot arrive at an apodictic interpretation, but can reach only a probable one." (Translated C. T. M., 1939, p. 828.) Nor should it be overlooked in this connection that the fathers of our Synod held their judgment in abeyance so long as the proof for a certain proposition was based on a passage from one of the New Testament books called deuterocanonical (better, antilegomena — those concerning which the testimony of the early Church is not uniform). See especially the essay in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1901, p. 259 ff.

2. In all doctrines we reach the area where revelation no longer permits our understanding to grasp all detail or every implication. There is no dissent among Lutherans regarding the doctrine of the omnipresence of the human nature of Christ. But there has been a considerable difference of opinion among the Lutheran fathers regarding the mode of presenting the omnipresence of Christ's human nature. G. Thomasius in his *Dogmatik* devotes sixty pages to the difference between Chemnitz and Brenz. But none of these

theologians ever questioned the orthodoxy of those who, within the framework of the Lutheran doctrine regarding the communication of attributes, differed in their teaching with reference to the exact meaning of the term "omnipresence of the human nature of Christ." As soon as the doctrine itself was attacked, as when Calixt denied the communication of attributes, this departure was rightly condemned as error.

That God is active in all things, that He upholds also the evildoers by His power, has raised a question as to the relation of God to evil acts. It would not be possible to quote any Scriptural answer to this question, but the theologians from Luther down to Stoeckhardt have faced this problem, especially in discussing predestination, and have given us their answer. Stoeckhardt* and A. L. Graebner† accept the view that God co-operates as to the *materiale* (the act simply viewed as an act) but not as to the *formale* (the act inasmuch as it is evil) of the evil act. Luther makes the same distinction, although he does not use the scholastic terminology, in *De Servo Arbitrio*. But the existence of a mystery to our understanding is freely acknowledged. So it is when we discuss what might be called the psychology or the mental process of inspiration — just how the suggested words came to the holy writers, to what extent they were aware of the Holy Spirit's impulse, especially when they were sifting historical records, when they predicted future events, when they castigated the sins of the age, etc. In these and in many other points of Christian teaching the rule of our Church has been to hew close to the mark where revelation ends and where our understanding must content itself with conjectures which cannot claim ecclesiastical

* *Loc. cit.*

† *Doctrinal Theology*, § 88.

authority and which must not contradict the Scriptures where they speak clearly on the same or a related subject.

The dogma which appropriates creation to the Father has given much headache to the dogmaticians who desire to formulate it precisely, as anyone can see who is willing to read the record in *C. T. M.*, 1941, p. 132 ff. But let these examples suffice for illustrations.

3. Especially in the *investigation of new issues* — new to a particular age or some area of the Church — even the best of theologians will at times falter, will assert their understanding of a doctrine in terms which they later will find it necessary to correct. Walther “heartily subscribes” to an expression of Dannhauer’s: “The fundamental errors of the Church Fathers who were swept into not yet sufficiently unfolded (*evolutas*) controversies, before the ice was broken, are called spots or imperfections (*naevi*), not heresies. But after these matters have been revealed, they can neither remain unknown nor be denied without injury to one’s salvation.” (*C. T. M.*, 1939, p. 419.) There was a time when the Missouri Synod could teach the doctrine of *election in view of faith*, as it did in Dietrich’s *Catechism* (1878, Qu. 321), and when the Wisconsin Synod in its hymnbook (1886, No. 386) taught its congregations to confess the same inadequate view of election (“Wo du nun vorher gesehen, dass ein Mensch auf dieser Erd’ deinem Geist nicht widerstehen, noch sein Werk verhindern werd’, sondern ohne Heuchelschein werd’ im Glauben feste sein: diesen hast du auserwaehlet und den Deinen zugezaehlet”). But this does not mean that after the Church has had the full benefit of years of discussion, it may still regard the *intuitu fidei* as a mode of presenting the doctrine of election which should have equal standing with the presentation of the Formula of Concord (as is done in the Madison Agreement of 1912). There have been errors in the opposite direction. Theolo-

gians who certainly had no Calvinistic leanings spoke of the "non-elect," referred their "non-election" to the fact that they rejected grace, spoke of the mystery of election as a "mystery in God," and used other expressions we would not condone today, in their efforts to define the true doctrine against synergism. Professor J. Schaller in his *Christologie* had the sentence: "Out of the election follows the result that some are saved and the others are not saved." This sentence Schaller retracted specifically as erroneous. Under the heading *Tene Mentem, Corrige Linguam*, Dr. Walther in the eighties contributed an article to *Lehre und Wehre* withdrawing a number of dubious expressions. Nor is there any disgrace in an occasional *Corrige Mentem*, as the discussion of a point in doctrine leads the theologian to perceive more clearly what are the implications and necessary deductions from a doctrine of Scripture. At the General Synod (Mo.), 1869, the lending of money on interest was characterized as "certainly not an article of the faith, but for that matter not unimportant since it closely touches Christian life and concerns a doctrine which is clearly and definitely contained in Holy Scripture. No question which God has clearly and definitely answered in His Word may be considered unimportant or treated as an open question. The command 'Endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit' and Christian love demand that we discuss whatever disagreement there is among us regarding a doctrine of Holy Scripture." However it was added that no term could be set for the reaching of agreement on such a point. "The fact that evil-minded people might charge us with inconsistency cannot be a reason for rushing this matter to a conclusion." We have here not only an example of evangelical patience in procedure, but an illustration of what we are urging in this section of our chapter. We certainly do not hold that every lending of money on interest is usury and that it is

"clearly and definitely" defined as sinful in the Scriptures. Not only individuals, but entire church bodies, under influence of new study and more precise weighing of texts, will yield positions which they have found insufficiently supported by the Word of God. The history of Martin Luther's own development reveals not a few of such examples; the separation of Church and State is certainly better understood in our Lutheran Church today than it was during the three centuries since the Reformation; and we believe that also the conditions of fellowship are emerging into a clearer light through the discussions of church union which we have had since 1938.

From this standpoint let us judge the puzzling discrepancies revealed in the earlier discussions of our Synod regarding the degree of doctrinal unity which must be demanded for Christian fellowship. On the one hand we have statements which make unity dependent definitely on agreement in the great fundamentals. Said Dr. Walther in his *The Lutheran Church the True Visible Church, Thesis VI*: "Communities destroying the unity of the Church on account of non-fundamental errors or personalities or ceremonies or wicked life according to God's Word are schismatic or separatistic communions." (Tr. in *Walther and the Church*, 1938, p. 119.)

Among the propositions drawn up by Professor Walther for the pastoral conference in New Bremen (*Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 14, 1868, p. 318 f.) we find the following:

"5. The Church Militant must indeed strive for absolute unity in faith and doctrine, but it never reaches a higher degree of this unity than a fundamental one."

In 1868 Dr. Walther discusses, *Lehre und Wehre*, p. 144 f., the position of Huelsemann on the question of the doctrinal agreement necessary for fellowship. The article was

directed against the Iowa Synod's position on open questions. Huelsemann is quoted thus: "In dogmas which do not injure the means for attaining salvation, all and every faithful may err. . . . Toleration in non-fundamental errors and in matters of ignorance pertain to the union of brotherly love among those who without division are associated in a visible church." Walther's comment is, "Huelsemann teaches nothing else but what we with all orthodox teachers assert, that an error is only then church divisive if it either destroys the dogmatic foundation or at least attacks the organic foundation, as when one stubbornly and consciously contradicts the clear Word of God even after convinced by argument." Coming down to particulars, Dr. Walther, *Lehre und Wehre*, 1869, p. 353, asserts that a difference regarding Sunday, like that between Luther and Gerhard, is by no means church divisive, so long as one holding it is willing to be instructed. He adds: "I know that in this life we shall attain only a fundamental unity (fundamentale Einigkeit)." Or with reference to the conversion of the Jews (Eastern District, 1868): "This should rather be listed among the problems, since Hunnius also assumed a conversion of the Jews, but for that matter was not regarded as a heretic by the Church." The observation was added: "If one does not go beyond Hunnius and only assumes that there will be a conversion of large masses of Jews to the Christian Church, then we are dealing with a theological problem on which there may be room for debate. But if one dreams of a splendid future of the Jews as a separate nation, their return to Palestine possibly, and their dominion over all nations, this comes close to being chiliasm and becomes dangerous and objectionable."

Under the caption "What is Fundamental in Christianity?" *Lehre und Wehre*, 1869, said (p. 144 f.): "Ferner lassen sich die Glaubenslehren, weil sie ihrem Inhalte nach

nicht alle von gleicher Wichtigkeit sind, nach dieser Eigenschaft eintheilen in: . . . II. *articulos non fundamentales*, nichtfundamentale Lehren, d. h. solche, welche zwar nicht in den organischen Zusammenhang des dogmatischen Lehrfundamentes gehoeren, weil sie nicht organisch mit dem Grunde verbunden sind, die aber doch in der heil. Schrift geoffenbart, daher Gegenstand des Glaubens sind und den Gehorsam des Glaubens von den Menschen fordern. Solche sind z. B. die Lehre von der ewigen Verdammnis der gefallenen Engel, die geschichtlichen Berichte der heil. Schrift, sofern sie nicht die Erloesung enthalten, die Lehre von der christlichen Freiheit in Gebraeuchen, vom Antichrist u. s. w. Dies sind keine Glaubensartikel, deshalb koennen sie unbeschadet des Glaubens- und Lehrfundamentes sowohl unbekannt sein, als auch geleugnet werden, denn an sich zerreisst das nicht den organischen Complex der Glaubensartikel, noch hebt es ein anderes Fundamentaldogma auf. Damit ist aber nicht gesagt, dass die Leugnung einer solchen Lehre nicht sonst Schaden genug thut; wer aber vollends eine solche, wenn auch untergeordnete, Lehre leugnen wuerde, obgleich er weiss und sieht, dass sie in Gottes Wort geoffenbart ist, der wuerde damit, wie gesagt, die Wahrheit der goettlichen Offenbarungen leugnen und somit ebenfalls in einen grundstuerzenden Irrthum fallen." (Article by H. Hanser.)

A few years later, *Lehre und Wehre*, 1872: "We are indeed far removed from any assertion that without making any distinctions all doctrines of Holy Scripture under all circumstances and everywhere are to be emphasized and asserted to the same absolute degree when it is a matter of passing judgment on the faith of the individual or on the orthodoxy of a church body or of the process of granting or denying church fellowship. According to the Word of God and following the example of our faithful fathers,

we are well aware of the distinctions that must be observed in this matter."

Now, while these expressions are so plain as to admit no misunderstanding, it would be a simple matter to quote expressions from the same period in which chiliasm, the universal conversion of the Jews, and the modern aberrations regarding Antichrist are rejected as "subversive errors," and those who deny that the Pope is the Antichrist are declared unworthy of the Lutheran name (Milwaukee Colloquy). We know also how strictly discipline was used in the case of those who persisted in teaching chiliasm. What does all this add up to? The answer is: The apparent inconsistency of some of the Missourian fathers does not amount to an actual, essential discrepancy. Walther himself never contradicted his own statements between 1866 and 1873, including the Milwaukee Colloquy. But the *emphasis* placed by some men on the two important points accounts for an occasional apparent contradiction. Yet a careful analysis will show that this emphasis depended upon the circumstances. If it was a matter of weakness or need of further instruction in non-fundamentals, the fathers were most emphatic in urging patience; but none of them, least of all Dr. Walther, ever declared non-fundamental doctrines non-essential. They never asserted that contradiction of a revealed doctrine of Scripture, recognized as such, could be tolerated. While there is no such thing as a "development of Christian doctrine," the Church has at various times been compelled to study and restudy certain teachings of the faith, test the adequacy of their dogmatic formulation, etc., and has in this manner attained to that clarity of statement of which the Formula of Concord is the outstanding example. Yet also in our confessional writings certain teachings are only adumbrated because there was no occasion for seeking explicitness as to their formulation. We have no article on the

inspiration of Scripture in any of our symbols. There is no discussion of creation as opposed to evolutionism — naturally not. Even so today we must make allowances for the difficulty of every new approach. Never before has the Church been compelled as today to define its stand on the relation of Church and State. It is not surprising that sharp differences develop as to the application of the Scriptural principles involved (baccalaureate services, Bible reading in the public schools, prayers in Congress, etc.). As for our body, the Missouri Synod has never before found occasion to subscribe to a common statement as a doctrinal basis sufficient for future fellowship, as it did in 1938. There is not a clear-cut situation as to the publica doctrina of certain Lutheran bodies. There is still some uncharted territory. It behooves us to learn a lesson from the past, recognize the difficulties of the investigation of new issues, and be moderate and charitable in our judgment.

4. A further reason for maintaining a sane and objective stand even in such important matters — yes, because of the very importance of such matters as Christian teaching and life — is expressed in the saying "*de minimis ecclesia non iudicat*" — "the Church does not pass judgment on trifles." This holds good pre-eminently, of course, in matters of life. As Dr. L. Fuerbringer said in *Der Lutheraner*, 1939, p. 171: "Certainly we retain the old principle 'Let justice prevail even if the world should perish,' but I frequently notice a good deal of stubbornness and not only conscientious scruples or human weaknesses. Not everything in this world can be straightened out, not every wrong word, whether in speech or in writing, can be retracted. Is not God a God of peace (1 Cor. 14:33), and does not the Scripture tell us not to be quarrelsome, but to forgive and forget? . . . The saying 'Blessed are the peacemakers' also concerns congregational meetings and conferences. I certainly do not now

speak of matters of conscience, but many a one makes reference to his conscience when really it is his stubborn, sinful heart."

But also in the field of doctrine and in the application of principles to concrete cases there is such a thing as coming down to infinitesimals. Certainly, we are aware of the temptation, inherent in such a proposition, toward laxity in practice. But the abuse of a sound principle does not invalidate the proper use. We have just discussed at some length the growing clarity which the Church has attained at different periods on one point or another; and the better our light, the greater our obligation. A congregation which has had years of instruction regarding the evil of lodge membership is expected to hew close to the line, while in a neglected flock we tolerate evils until consciences have been instructed. Yet in theological discussion the point at issue may become so minute that even the best minds will begin to falter and the most orthodox become guilty of heterodox expression. In his study *Dogma and Compulsory Doctrine* the psychoanalyst Theodore Reik has commented on the fact that all religious controversies tend to be concentrated on apparently unimportant details, but that these are debated in all the more heated manner. This "relegation to trifles" Reik demonstrates in detail in connection with the Arian controversy of the fourth century. We have had an example in our own Church when a dispute in the Saxon Free Church on the question "Is Faith a Work?" found its repercussions on this side and led to an extremely heated although brief controversy. The culmination of this argument was reached in the sentence that "faith is an active passivity." In this way controversy tends to become absurd. Again we are faced with a certain limitation of the human understanding. Human judgment is imperfect. We grope for words and do not find the adequate term. We are some-

times in haste. We quote with abbreviations and fail to supply the omission dots or the quotation marks. We have our prejudices. We become personally irritated. We may have a strain of stubbornness. And we are going to admit to these failings also in the orthodox Church of this or any past age. There is here a demand for the exercise of charity and of common sense.

Actual cases might be quoted in great number. There was that book review which recommended — not enthusiastically, but recommended — a work which contained really errors in fundamentals. The reviewer had taken something for granted. This should not happen. It will occasionally happen until you have angels write our book reviews. There is the book of devotion which is perfect in its theology except for two lines which contain the boldest kind of Calvinism. We listen to a Doctor of Divinity and hear him explain to his congregation that the seventh day indeed has been abrogated, but God still demands of us to sanctify one day out of seven. The day will never come in the Christian Church when such slips will be altogether avoided. Do we, then, call fundamental error, Calvinism, a false position regarding Sunday, “trifles,” “infinitesimals”? Certainly not. But the occurrence of such slips must be expected in the most orthodox communion and must then be treated not as a lapse of the offender from saving truth but as a blunder, an aberration, what our fathers called a *naevus*, not to be charged against any man’s orthodoxy or affecting his standing in the Church. Again it is sanctified common sense which will determine when such a lapse is worthy of public correction. What a dreadful place the Christian home would be if every ill-considered word, every overemphasized complaint, every quick rejoinder or sharp “comeback” would have to be amended, apologized for! And what a Church in which nothing can be left to the individual’s summation

of all his faults in "Forgive us our trespasses"! What odious legalism where the three degrees of discipline are invoked in every case of objectionable behavior, for every offensive speech. What crimes against Christian love have been committed by acting on the proposition — in itself perfectly correct — that what has been said or printed publicly may be attacked publicly. And Reik is not far from the truth when he points out that the most acrimonious and bitter type of polemics develops in the field of what very probably may be regarded as *trifles*.

A reminder is in place that with the principle "*de minimis ecclesia non judicat*" our fathers did not express a *tolerance* of infinitesimals; they do not say "*ecclesia tolerat*" but "*non judicat*," and this is not a distinction without a difference. The question has arisen whether wagering a candy bar on the outcome of a game of bowling is to be classified as gambling. Now, by refusing to discipline or express censure for such an act, the Church does not "approve" of it. There may be accidental circumstances which would make even so small a wager reprehensible. All depends upon the circumstances, the persons involved, attitudes, objectives, all those undefinable things which we call accidental, but which may be important enough to make an act a transgression of some moral law. With such possibilities in view the Church cannot say that when a certain *minimum* of action is reached, moral implications disappear absolutely. The entire field of adiaphora might be discussed under this heading since the point is often reached where things taper down to such a fine point that it is difficult to say whether the assertion of Christian freedom or the tolerance of Christian charity is the indicated course. If we err in such matters, a well-instructed Church will not sit in judgment.

5. Whenever *questions of Christian life and of congregational practice* arise, we have a complication for our judg-

ment. It is then no longer a simple word of God or the direct inference or clear implication of a Scriptural principle, but there are two factors: the teaching of God's Word on the one hand and human conduct on the other. Here pre-eminently it becomes evident that our assurance will be in proportion to the directness of our approach. Conviction will be more certain in proportion as the factors to be considered are few in number and will be less certain in proportion as these factors are of a larger number or are defined with some difficulty. When the proposition is as simple as "Thou shalt not kill" and a case of willful murder is in question, we have no trouble in making the application and judging that this person is a murderer. All the Commandments of the Decalog would supply similar examples. Covetousness is a sin, and he who gives evidence of the vice of greed is subject to discipline. But the case is not always so simple.

"Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" is a divinely inspired admonition. The Christian day school is maintained among us in obedience to this command. But it requires a long trail of syllogisms to prove that the parish school as we have it today is to be maintained as a matter of conscience. Still more slender is the line of proof which leads to the excommunication of a member because he does not send his children to such a school. Our Church has had one experience (Cincinnati case) in which, with the best of intention, the attempt was made to make a case of discipline of such refusal. No one would be willing to uphold such procedure today, although we do believe that we can appeal to the conscience of our parents in our appeals for support of the parish school.

There was a time when life insurance policies were of the type which made the payment of the premiums a gamble

with the insurance company; if after a specified number of years the insured was living, his money was lost. This was a simple gamble, and there was more or less insistence on the position that to insure one's life was a sin. Now, why have we no record of any cases of discipline? For the simple reason that the cogency of the proof from Scripture was not so great as to justify the position that those who insure their lives are evident sinners, consciously acting contrary to the will of God. Logically the line can be traced from the Seventh Commandment (via the doctrine that gambling is a sin and again via the junction point that I am responsible to God for my property, thence over another series of equally valid statements) to the truth that I must not risk my money on a term policy of insurance. I have established a disagreement of the last member with the first, which is a commandment of God. Yet the fact that this is logically correct does not prove that he who carries life insurance thereby consciously sets aside the authority of the Word of God. The same problem, of course, arises when a widow accepts \$5,000.00 when the premiums paid amounted only to, let us say, \$500.00. In his paragraphs on Life Insurance (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1908, p. 241 ff.), Dr. F. Bente concludes the abstract discussion with the statement that while "life insurance is wrong," those who insure their lives need not become subject to church discipline. The ministry of our Atlantic District in 1909 adopted a paper defending life insurance and hence disagreeing fundamentally with the theses of Dr. Bente. Now, why can these two opinions stand side by side without involving unionism? I think the answer has been given in the above.

We return to the rigorous views entertained by Dr. Walther regarding the taking of interest. He regarded the ordinary lending of money on interest as a sin and charged

the clergy with the duty of preaching against it. Yet I know of no case of discipline instituted by him against those who took interest. When a meeting of clergymen and laymen in Boston expressed its dissent from Dr. Walther's views on usury, he did not regard the bonds of fellowship as severed. (Pamphlet: "Das Ausleihen des Geldes auf Interessen im Lichte des Gebotes der Naechstenliebe. Eine freundliche Kritik der Aufsaeetze im 'Lutheraner' und 'Lehre und Wehre' vom praktischen Standpunkt aus fuer die Pastoren und Laien der Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St." See also paper on usury prepared for the Minnesota and Dakota District meeting by Theo. Buenger, 1900.) Indeed, Dr. Walther publicly declared this doctrine non-essential for fellowship and church union. A writer in an Iowa Synod paper had reproached him with inconsistency because he rejected the idea of open questions, yet refused to separate himself from those who took interest on their money. Walther replied (*Der Lutheraner*, May 1, 1871) in terms which substantially asserted the position that matters of this kind cannot be handled like a heresy or a denial of some doctrine of the faith. Similar difficulties have troubled the Church in all ages. To avoid them, the theologians have sometimes gone the length of denying all right of owning property. Thereby they settled a thousand problems by one fell swoop, but our Confessions call such procedure "insane" and assert: "There are infinite discussions concerning contracts, in reference to which good consciences can never be satisfied unless they know the rule that it is lawful for a Christian to make use of civil ordinances and laws. This rule protects consciences when it teaches that contracts are lawful before God just to the extent that the magistrates or laws approve them." (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XVI, 64. *Tri-glossa*, p. 332.)

Another example. That the Church and the State should be separate is a truth generally recognized. However, no Scripture quotation, such as the familiar passages — Matt. 22:21; John 18:36; Rom. 13 — distinctly says that these institutions should be *separate* but only that they should be *distinguished*, each as having its own field and functions. That they should be kept separate is an *inference*, and a valid one. But to make the application from this deduction to specific cases such as Bible reading in the public schools or to the “baccalaureate service” of a class of high school graduates, requires a leap in our reasoning of which many, due to their familiarity with certain accepted viewpoints, are not even conscious. Or is it not true that neither the Church nor the State nor the separation of Church and State are really, and by this I mean by a natural sequence, an evident implication, involved in the “baccalaureate service”? There is not the Church, but the minister of a church. There is not the State, not even the State school, but a class participating in a public ceremony. Or let us say that we are urging the *American principle* of separation of Church and State. It is at once clear that one may become involved in the same fallacy as on the theological side. Participation or non-participation in such a service does not affect in any way the validity of the diplomas which the State confers. If that were the case, or if the State should arbitrarily assign to one denomination the prescriptive right of conducting these services, or if the Church demanded this right from the State authorities, we should have indeed a mixture of the two provinces. Because there is a great hiatus between the Scripture passages and the final judgment arrived at, we have one reason for the debate regarding the legitimacy of conducting baccalaureate services. The more general the principle from which we make an application to the specific case, the less compelling is the line of proof.

By this it should not be denied that general principles are perfectly convincing *when their application is clear*. Although nowhere explicitly stated in Scripture, I believe that there can be no misconception of such teachings as the divine nature of the ministerial call; the requirement that church discipline be unanimous; the idolatrous nature of Masonic worship; the anti-Christian character of Communism in its classical form. Here we have a set of general principles which are by no means difficult to apply in a given case. But the limitation should be noted that the convicting power of principle can be asserted only when the application is clear. Another way of saying that *the mind must know what it is in a given case expected to work with*.

Sometimes the principle itself is of such a type that it requires continual defining before we can make applications from it. When we speak of *offense*, we must at once distinguish between that which is given and that which is taken. (A distinction which is itself the result of a really complicated, though perfectly valid, process of reasoning from the Scriptures.) Next we assert with equal correctness that also the *appearance* of doing wrong may be an offense to the brother. Next the application is made; and with what results? Because it has the appearance of proselytizing, we must not distribute hymnbooks to strangers at our church services!

It is, in view of all this, hardly necessary to point out the caution which we should observe in the formulating of general judgments having some remote connection with the clear teachings of Scripture, or some Scripture text, in the field of *church fellowship*. As it is necessary to distinguish *things* from *words*; the substance from the accident; the real from the potential; so we must also remember that our own assertion that a matter is "perfectly clear" does not make it so. It is possible that others will regard it as "per-

fectly clear" when they have once traced the same long train of conclusions by which we have arrived at a given judgment, for instance, that joint prayer is not permissible with any and everyone who professes the Christian faith and whom we believe to be Christian, or when they have followed the long chain of deductions by which we connect some word of God with the principle that clergyman A, who is entirely orthodox in his public profession, is to be called a "unionist" because he is serving a congregation (whose right of call we recognize as right and proper, being still a Christian congregation) which holds membership in a body in which clergyman B and Professor C are teaching false doctrine.

Finally, our dogmaticians have always distinguished between doctrines of the faith (*Glaubenslehren*) and certain adiaphorous things which arise in their discussion by the theologians. John Musaeus (1613-1681) refers to the possibility of "A true and godly peace among churches that have disagreement and controversy regarding . . . certain questions that develop as side issues in the field of doctrine so long as they are of the nature that they can be affirmed or denied without affecting *the Christian faith* and life." To which John William Baier agrees (in his *Compendium*, III, 668): "If there is a difference of opinion only regarding adiaphora or about questions that have arisen by the way [as side issues] in the discussion of *doctrine*, it is to be held that even while there is a disagreement, there may be true and godly peace." And Calovius speaks of "differences in minor points of doctrine while the unity of faith is retained and no *article of faith* is thereby subverted." Those who divide the Church for such reasons he terms schismatics, or originators of unchristian divisions. (*Op. cit.*, III:636.) The same distinction is made by our dogmaticians generally. It should be kept in mind when in a later chapter we discuss doctrinal aberrations.

CHAPTER IV

The Rightful Place of Controversy in Church Life

Speaking the truth in love. EPH. 4:15

B_Y controversy we mean the discussion, more particularly, the public discussion in conference or in print, of religious differences. Whether we consider controversy as good, *per se*, or as an unmixed evil, is of little practical moment, for the simple reason that it exists. It will always exist in the visible Church, inasmuch as the Christian people as well as the theologian will be confronted by new problems in every age which require study and discussion for their solution and because the enemies of the truth will find at all times some new means either of perverting Scripture or for rejecting the Christian system of belief. With the argument against unbelief in its various forms we are not here concerned; that is the proper field of apologetics. Polemics is the proper technical term for the defense of Christian truth within the visible Church against those who are departing from the faith and from sound interpretation of the Scriptures.

The object of controversy is already indicated in the above. It has the purpose of establishing the truth of Scrip-

ture. In a wider sense it includes every discussion of differences of opinion regarding matters of faith and life. There was dispute not only among the Jews, but among the disciples concerning the meaning of the Savior's doctrine. Even after the Holy Spirit was given to the Church to lead it into all truth, there were contentions among the early leaders of the Church, and also error in fundamentals reared its head. The texts which we examine in these chapters will supply whatever evidence is needed on this score. Certainly, if the Apostles had to contend with misunderstandings and false doctrine, we have no right to expect the dawning of the day when all controversy will cease in the Church.

In the following we shall discuss first *the subject* and then *the persons* involved in controversial issues.

The subject is, first of all, *the sense and teaching of Scripture* as the authority in all matters of faith and life. It follows that we are dealing, as fundamental to all agreement and fellowship, with the sacred text. It reduces itself to the application of the rules of sound hermeneutics to the Hebrew and Greek text of the canonical writings.*

We regard exegetical theology as the primary, systematic theology as the secondary factor in the presentation of saving truth. Exegesis is analytical, dogmatics, synthetic. First the meaning of the sacred text must be established, then we

* We quote without reservation all the canonical books, also the *antilegomena* (James, Jude, the Second and Third Letters and Revelation of John, Second Peter, Hebrews) for the establishment of doctrine and church practice. Yet we do not regard as an errorist one who either shares the doubts of some of our older teachers, including Luther, regarding one or the other of these books, and in argument with such a one we do not insist on a position which can be held only by quoting a canonical book of second rank. Consult *Der Lutheraner* of 1854 and *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. II (1856), p. 204 ff., in which Dr. Walther heavily underscores the statement that a difference on this matter does not justify us to call a man errorist or heretic. *Lehre und Wehre* reaffirmed this position in 1901 (p. 259 ff.).

may systematize and organize the information derived from our study of the Scriptures. In essence, then, theological controversy rests upon the acceptance of the authority of Scripture and on the establishment of its meaning by the use of the ordinary principles of logic and language as laid down in any handbook of hermeneutics.

Subject of controversy in a secondary sense is *the public doctrine* of the Church. This includes first of all the confessions or symbolical books, but also the record of theological formulation and opinion which the Church has accumulated through the centuries. To come down to particulars, our Lutheran Church has an historic position on the means of grace, the relation of Church and ministry, Christian education, and a number of principles by which our life as a Church is regulated. This holds good of a body like the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. Not only are our views and attitudes necessarily colored by the Church which has nurtured us, but the conservative character of Lutheranism is sufficient reason for a continual study of the theological literature of our Church. For this we have all the more reason in the devotion to orthodox teaching and the magnificent scholarship which characterizes the older dogmatical and exegetical works of our Church. "Remember them which . . . have spoken unto you the Word of God." It will be one means of observing the warning which follows: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:7, 9). The time will never come when we can ignore the work done by Abraham Calov in his *Biblia Illustrata* and by J. A. Bengel in his *Gnomon* for the interpretation of Scripture or the dogmatical treatises of Chemnitz, Gerhard, Quenstedt, Baier (to mention only these), for the systematic presentation of the doctrine of the Church. Certainly, we shall not cast reflections on any man's theology because he still regards with veneration and studies with

assiduity the writings of Dr. C. F. W. Walther and all those who labored especially during the first fifty years of our synodical life through the pages of *Lehre und Wehre* and by means of synodical essays in the formulation of our *publica doctrina* and of our ecclesiastical practice. In order that these immense treasures of clear Scriptural theology should not be lost to our Church, we must "cultivate the languages," as Luther urged, so that we may always have scholars about to read with ease the Latin of our Lutheran fathers and the German of our synodical founders.

We shall not waste space in urging the limitation that controversy cannot establish doctrine by quoting the fathers. But there should be a word of caution against the careless quotation of such sources or the quoting of disconnected expressions which seem to strengthen our own position with the "authority" of a Luther, a Walther, or a Stoeckhardt. Walther's caution should be called to mind: "In order to use quotations aright from our old dogmaticians, it is necessary not only to look up a passage here and there, but to be acquainted with their entire system." (Said in connection with the discussion of "open questions," *Lehre und Wehre*, 1868.)

Regarding the *persons* involved in controversy we must certainly distinguish between those who are in fellowship with us, those who are seeking fellowship with us, those who are *in statu confessionis*, those who differ from us although accepting the organic foundation (the Scriptures); those who are officially committed to a heterodox position; and finally those who are enemies of fundamental Christian truth. To treat any one of these as though he were a member of one of the other groups just mentioned would not be realistic for one thing, would be shifting the entire ground of discussion, and would be either a concession to liberalism, or would be evidence of a lack of Christian love. Unfortunately, all these faults have from the beginning inhered in theological controversy.

Before approaching in a later chapter the more specific problems indicated in the above, there are certain broad principles to be called to mind which should apply in all controversy, regardless of the amount of difference separating us from our opponent. Some of the principles reviewed in our earlier chapters at once come to mind. Our dispute, above all things, must not concern itself simply with *words*. Among those who depart from the truth St. Paul lists men who are "doting about questions and strifes of words" (1 Tim. 6:4). St. Paul says that of such disputing about words comes "strife, railings, evil surmises, perverse disputings" — by which we are reminded of the observation in our previous chapter that controversy long continued is apt to center upon some infinitesimal point of argument and grow all the more heated and bitter. No matter who the opponent, the Church is to deal with the erring ones patiently and kindly. Our Church holds — on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions — that every teaching of Scripture must be accepted and can never be made an open question. Scripture demands that. See, for instance, Matt. 28:20; 2 Tim. 1:13, and other passages more fully dealt with in another chapter. And the Confessions demand it. See, for instance, Formula of Concord (*Triglotta*, p. 1095): "No room is given to the least error." Nor do we know of any official declaration of our Church which would grant anyone the right to deny clearly revealed teachings. However, as fundamental as this demand is that other one that "the time for breaking off fraternal relations with those also who err in non-fundamental doctrines arrives then only when they stubbornly refuse to accept the convincing testimony of Scripture." (C. F. W. Walther, *Lehre und Wehre*, 14, p. 109.) Until then our argument is to be seasoned with charity that believeth all things and hopeth all things, and so long as the opponent is willing to be instructed from the Scriptures,

the Apology bids us to "overlook certain less serious mistakes, lest the Church fly apart into various schisms." (*Triglotta*, p. 185. See also pp. 189, 122.) On no account is the dispute to degenerate into an argument about words and technical terms. We resent the imputation that our theological controversies are a case of "doctrinal hairsplitting." But let us not so refine our argument that "hairsplitting" becomes really a justifiable term. We are not to search for heresy as the Gestapo searches for its victims. It would be a sad business if, *e. g.*, those who agree in the teaching that the words of Scripture are inspired by the Holy Ghost should fall out on account of a difference in regard to the term "dictation" or regarding the *process* of inspiration. Theologians should be extremely careful especially as to their insistence upon or also rejection of such terms as "essence," "problem," or "social gospel," or other terms derived from philosophy or dialectics, any expression that is not a Scripture but a church term. Here are a few examples. In his book on *The Babylonish Captivity* Luther speaks of three "sacraments," one being penance. Repentance is called the "third sacrament" also in his Large Catechism (*Triglotta*, 751), as does also the Augsburg Confession (pp. 261, 309). The right principle is that announced by the Apology: The *numbering* of the Sacraments is not of any consequence provided people "perceive aright the matters handed down in Scripture" (p. 309). In the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, February, 1941, we read about calling the Law a means of grace: "Regarding the expression 'means of grace,' as also many others of similar import and function, such orthodox teachers should not be hereticated as do not employ it in precisely the same manner as do the more cautious and accurate theologians, provided, of course, that they teach the true Scripture doctrine which is stressed by it. Quenstedt, for example, does not wish the divine Law to be excluded

entirely from the term 'means of grace,' though he rightly distinguishes between the Law and the Gospel and ascribes to each its proper Scriptural domain and function. He writes: 'When we attribute to the Word a divine power and efficacy to produce spiritual effects we wish not to be understood as speaking of the Gospel only, but also of the Law; for, although the Law does not produce these gracious results directly and per se, that is, does not kindle faith in Christ and effect conversion, since this is rather to be ascribed to the Gospel, still the letter is not on this account dead but is efficacious after its kind; for it killeth, 2 Cor. 3:6; it worketh wrath, Rom. 4:15, etc.' (Cf. *Doctrinal Theology*, by H. Schmid, translated by Hay-Jacobs, p. 504.) If from this peculiar point of view any one wishes to call the entire Word of God, Law and Gospel, a means of grace, no charge of teaching false doctrine should be preferred against him, since no unscriptural doctrine is involved, and Law and Gospel remain rightly divided. Quenstedt's words, however, may be cited to show just why more exact dogmaticians recognize only the Gospel and the Sacraments as the divinely ordained means of grace, and not the Law."

A second reminder for profitable argumentation—the kind of argumentation by which we win the opponent over to our position—is that stressed in the *Australian Lutheran* of April 28, 1939: "The first requirement to an understanding is that each have that *confidence in the other* that he is honestly endeavoring to act in obedience to God and in brotherly love." It is possible that theologians will actually become entangled in error through the use of terminology. The sad case of Flacius ("original sin belongs to the 'substance' of man") has already been mentioned. In such a case, naturally, the Church will avoid even terms that have been used without heretical implications by entire generations of theologians—like the term "in view of faith" (in-

tuitu fidei) in the doctrine of predestination. Theological terms may become a mark of false doctrine. But never can we condemn an opponent simply because of his use of a theological term which has been abused by others or which has not been traditional with us in our own systematic theology.

Another caution which applies to polemics under all circumstances is this: we may not charge the opponent with error because of an occasional skidding off the safe concrete of theological discussion. Both Walther and Pieper have not ceased to condemn the procedure of taking advantage of a man's unguarded expression when other statements of the same writer, dealing with the same subject, or in some other connection, are clear evidence of his soundness in this particular matter. The world has a coarse saying: "Give the devil his due." This should certainly hold good in the case of one whom we are hoping to win over to a sound position throughout. All insinuations based on the possibility of a construction *in malum sensum* are contrary not only to the Christian principle of love, but are against ordinary morality. There could be no social, business, or political life if such constructions should dictate our relationships. It would be a simple matter to show that by such techniques it is possible to make a heresy of almost any theological proposition which does not *literatim* repeat the phraseology of Scripture. A few examples must suffice. The Augsburg Confession says that as compared with the outward unprofitable works of medieval piety the "more recent doctrine" of the Romanists that we are justified "by faith and works" "is more tolerable than the former one and can afford more consolation than their old doctrine" (*Tri-glossa*, p. 53). One might find at least a strong leaning towards semi-Pelagianism, if one were so minded, in that last phrase. Or what shall we make of "He suffered and was

buried," in the Nicene Creed? Are we to construe this omission of a reference to Christ's death an intentional one? Are we to cast doubt on the authors of this Creed as regards their belief in the meritorious death of Christ? Shall we charge them with "suppressing" an important, yes, one of the most important facts of our faith? Yet there has at all times been a tendency for controversy to reach a certain pathological stage in which the construction *in malum sensum* was employed in order to place the opponent outside of the pale of fellowship, even of Christianity.

The concept of *heresy* should receive more careful attention than it has received among us. In another chapter the Scriptural references to heresy will be treated. For the present it is sufficient to state that heresy in the language of the Church has a very definite meaning. It is more than a departure from the truth, more than religious error, it is error in *fundamentals consistently* held by those *conscious* of their disagreement with Scripture and *making propaganda* for their views, and thereby producing offense in the Church. In some such way heresy is defined by all the teachers of our Church. Speaking of the difference as between Luther and Gerhard in the doctrine of the Sunday, Walther declares that this will not be regarded by any Missourian as divisive of church fellowship and the doctrine of Gerhard (who held that Sunday had taken the place of the Old Testament Sabbath as a prescribed Holy Day) will not be declared to be "a heresy." His words are worth quoting in the original. "Um die Lehre vom Sonntag will ich mir den Kopf herunter schlagen lassen. Jedoch wuerde ich, wenn ich eingesehen haette, dass Jemand darin irrt, ihn *nicht gleich darum verketzern*." (*Stenographisch aufgezeichnetes Colloquium*, p. 110.) "Alles, was Gott klar offenbart hat, ist keine offene Frage. Das ist eine ganz andere Frage, wie ich mich zu verhalten habe gegen einen

Irrenden, damit er nicht immer tiefer hineingerathe und ihn der Satan verschlinge; da wuerde ich selbst Einen, der in dem hohen Artikel von der Dreieinigkeit irrte, nicht gleich fuer einen Ketzer ansehen, *wie viel weniger den, der in einem untergeordneten Punkte irrt!* Nur wer also lehrt, dass er das *fundamentum personale* (Christus selbst), oder das *fundamentum dogmaticum* (die Summe aller Fundamental-Artikel), oder das *fundamentum organicum* (das werkzeugliche Fundament oder die heilige Schrift selbst) angreift und trotz wiederholter Ermahnung hartnaeckig erklaert, dass er bei seiner Lehre bleiben wolle, den erkläre ich fuer einen Ketzer, *nicht aber den, der das Fundament nicht angreift, oder der wohl auch in andern Punkten irrt, aber belehrt sein will.* Ich weiss, wir bringen es in diesem Leben weiter nicht, als zu einer *fundamentalen Einigkeit.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 76.) "Unsere Gemeinden wollen wissen: das, was gepredigt ist, ist goettliche Wahrheit; darauf koennen wir uns verlassen. Wehe dem Prediger, der was anderes auf die Kanzel bringt! Wehe dem Waechter, der es nicht straft! Wohl aber soll man sonst *sehr saeuberlich fahren und nur dann Einem die Gemeinschaft versagen, wenn es sich herausstellt, dass der Fehler in seiner boesen Gesinnung liegt.*" (S. 82.) . . . "Schliesslich muessen wir jedoch noch erklæren: so weit wir davon entfernt sind, einen Gerhard um seiner nicht durchaus symbolischen Darstellung der Lehre vom Sonntag willen verketzern und ihm lutherische Rechtglaeu-bigkeit absprechen zu wollen, und *so wenig es uns in den Sinn kommt, eine solche Abweichung fuer einen Grund zur Aufhebung kirchlicher Gemeinschaft anzusehen:* so koennen wir doch auch nicht auf das hohe Ansehen eines so grossen Kirchenlehrers hin, wie eines Gerhard, die in Gottes Wort klar geoffenbarte Lehre unserer Symbole vom Sonntag als eine s. g. offene Frage behandeln und ein Abweichen davon dulden." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1869, p. 356 f. The underscorings are throughout those of Dr. Walther.)

Closely related with the concept of heresy is that of *excommunication*. We do not in the proper use of the term "excommunicate" anyone except a member of our own Church, and these only through the resolution of a Christian congregation that such-and-such a one is under such sentence on account of life or teachings which make him one to be regarded even as a publican and a sinner. It is evident, therefore, that by refusing fellowship to a person or a church body we are not pronouncing the sentence of excommunication. By refusing joint worship or joint prayer with certain ones we do not pronounce them unbelievers and enemies of God. Luther, our Confessions, all the fathers of our Church, every theological text ever issued under auspices of the Lutheran Church, declare that there are certainly believers wherever the Word of God is being taught, even if mixed with error. More than that, we respect the relationship existing between pastors and congregations in such bodies. We declare mission work on our part among their people sheepstealing, proselytizing. Not even those whom we must exclude from our fellowship do we in every case pronounce excommunicated. For one thing, only a congregation can pronounce the ban of excommunication, and secondly, we hold that fellowship must be denied (broken off) not only for the sake of error in fundamentals, but whenever the sound doctrine is violated (as will be dealt with *in extenso* in a later chapter). Paul writes to the Thessalonians regarding those who "obey not our word by this Epistle." With these the members are to have "no company." This can only mean the suspension of church fellowship. But the words are added: "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:14, 15). Certainly we would not retain in our fellowship one who denied infant baptism and would announce to the congregation that his children will not be baptized until they are grown up. Yet the exclusion (expulsion) from fellowship

in such a case would not be equivalent to excommunication. In such cases our fathers have correctly urged that only where there is a subversion of the "organic foundation" of our faith, the authority of Scripture, a falling away from the faith can be charged.

Coming down to particulars in the technique of controversy, an observance of which will give guarantees of gaining those for the truth with whom we are negotiating a difference, the following principles should be remembered even in the heat of argument:

1. Both parties to a controversy should make sure that they *have their facts straight*. As Thomas Huxley once said: "The sure aim and strong arm are of no avail if there is an optical displacement of the object aimed at." This takes place, for instance, when chaplaincies are condemned because "the State calls the chaplain, and only the Church can issue a call." As a matter of fact, the Church calls the chaplain, and the State employs him. It serves no purpose to urge against life insurance that "a human life cannot be insured for dollars and cents," since no one has ever maintained any such proposition. It will be noted that all errors of judgment in which *words* are taken for *things* come under this heading.

2. That which might *follow logically* from a certain proposition must not be treated as though it *followed actually*. This is the error of treating the potential as if it were real. As when the rule is made of absolutely condemning the Boy Scout movement because it "involves unionism." As a matter of fact, there is *danger* of unionism in case the scoutmaster is a sectarian. But a potential participation of a troop in a Reformed service, for instance, is not actual participation, nor does it belong to the essence of the Boy Scout system but is an *accidens*. The danger of such entanglements in unionistic worship will cause us to take a negative stand as regards membership of Lutheran boys in sectarian

troops, but we cannot *forbid* such connections (under threat of discipline), unless the offense has become actual and its repetition must be reasonably expected. We cannot discipline for offenses that *might* be committed.

3. One should beware of raising some *generally accepted axiom* to the dignity of a *theological principle*. It has been maintained with a good deal of fervor, for instance, that it is wrong to speak of character training under any conditions except those of Christian education. The contention is without merit since the training of "character" is the essential of any kind of education as a reference to the dictionary will show. When the State of Nebraska offers a course in "character study," it may not achieve lasting success, but it is guilty of no error in the use of language. Elsewhere we have seen large issues decided on the principle that "whosoever says A must say B," and the axiom was quoted as though it were gospel truth. As a matter of fact, only a fool will ever commit himself to say B simply before he has said A. In other words, when B arises, we must see whether it is a B in *forma* or only possesses the *materiale* of the A, — an outward resemblance only, with the case itself essentially different.

4. Also the *interpretation of texts* should be based on better grounds than Lutheran (synodical) tradition. The writer of this chapter is convinced that Psalm 2:7 is correctly quoted as a text proving the essential deity of Jesus Christ. But if John Schaller in his *Christology* (p. 27) refers the text to the entrance of Christ on His Messianic office, I must have better reason than that "we have always understood this to mean" so-and-so in arguing the meaning of the passage. We remember hearing a young essayist severely handled because he presumed to interpret Matt. 11:3 as an example of also Christians weakening in their faith. When he tried to defend his position by quoting verse 4, the

critics came close to raising a charge of false doctrine since the "clear meaning" of the passage (verse 7 ff.) was against the essayist and "our Synod has always held to this interpretation." This is surely creating a human authority for our doctrine and comes close to reviving the "official exegesis" which Luther had thrown out the window when he established the truth that Scripture alone can make an article of faith.

5. It will not do to condemn theatergoing *per se*, the saloon *per se*, the dance *per se*, but enough has been said before about distinguishing the essence from the accident and about permitting the mind to become befogged by identifying the potential with the real. Once more, also the difference between words and things will help us settle many an argument. Certainly, no one will condemn the Virginia reel and other square dances and folk dances simply because they are called "dances."

6. Finally, we must urge *charity* even when dealing with an opponent in a matter of doctrine. Love is still the greatest principle of conduct and cannot be excluded from our dealing with an opponent. "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) is said of the attitude toward a Christian involved in error. The irenic purpose of admonishing the opponent is urged in too many passages to be quoted here. Possibly the worst offense against love is that of denouncing a theologian as an errorist because he has expressed himself improperly in a matter which he has elsewhere presented in harmony with Scripture or of charging a scholar with bungling if not with ignorance because he commits an historical error, as when a noted teacher of our Church writes that Calvin introduced an error which, as a matter of fact, Wycliffe had taught long before him. The day will never come when even experts in a given field may be expected to know all and to remember all.

CHAPTER V

The Church, Unity, and Fellowship

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. EPH. 4:3

I

IN our discussion of the fellowship question one of the most critical areas is that of the doctrine of the Church. This is, in fact, the *punctum saliens*, since it must be evident to the student of the present trends in church history that most of the honest bewilderment and confusion rests upon a partial or a total misunderstanding of the difference between the term "church" in its real sense and in the derived sense. We must therefore make a detailed investigation of this term and all those related to it or associated with it, in an attempt to draw conclusions which will present the Scriptural teaching on the subject.

For the sake of completeness and in view of the important position occupied by the word in modern theology, we begin with the term *kingdom* (*βασιλεία*), which is often modified by the genitives "of the heavens," "of God," "of Christ."

The term occurs more than twenty times in the Old Testament, chiefly in the Book of Daniel, and approximately 140 times in the New Testament. If, for the sake of convenience, we employ the designations of doctrinal theology, we may divide the passages concerned into those which speak of the kingdom of power, those which refer to the kingdom of grace, and those which designate the kingdom of glory. For the purposes of this discussion we shall omit the passages which clearly speak of the kingdom of power, as in Psalm 103:19. And the passages which refer to the kingdom of glory also do not concern us in the considerations before us, because it is evident, even in a superficial study, that the boundary between the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory is very fluid, since the two ideas frequently merge, so that the heavenly kingdom merely indicates the enjoyment of blessings in full measure which are the possession of the believers already on this side of the grave. The emphasis on the final fruition and glorious consummation of all Christian hopes is plainly stated in passages like Matt. 25:34 ("inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"); Mark 14:25 ("until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God"); Luke 12:32 ("It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"); 23:42 ("Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom"); Acts 14:22 ("we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God").

We are interested at this time, and for the purpose of this study, in the concept *kingdom of grace*. Just what is its essence or nature, its scope, its content? What are its attributes? What does citizenship in this "kingdom" imply? What features receive the strongest consideration in the Word of God? What distinctions are to be observed?

It is evident from the outset that the concept of the kingdom is not uniform, since Scripture sometimes refers to a

more intangible idea of a gracious power on the part of God or Christ, then again to an inner possession of the believers, and in still other passages to the group of the believers itself, more or less clearly marked off.

Let us begin with the passages which give us a definition of the concept in its essential features, according to its real inner substance. In Rom. 14:7 the Apostle writes: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," a definition which excludes every form of present-worldly connotation and in particular that which is so strongly stressed in the theology of Modernism. The kingdom of God is not essentially concerned with matters of this life, with things which deal with the maintenance of men's physical being; it is interested in the life of the soul, in the qualities which bring men into relation with the true purpose of their life. The person who, by faith, enters into possession of the righteousness wrought for him by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ and of the peace with God brought to him by the death of the Savior on Calvary, has the kingdom, enjoys the kingdom, and is in the kingdom of God. A thought closely related to this is found in 1 Cor. 4:20, where the Apostle states that "the kingdom of God is not in word," that is, not in mere outward talk or empty speech, "but in power," namely, the efficacy which is inherent in the Word and brings the blessings of the kingdom to the hearts of men.

The most important passage setting forth the real significance of the term kingdom is that in which Jesus Himself supplies the definition, namely, Luke 17:20 ff.: "When He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." So Jesus rules out all observation (*παράτηρησις*),

by virtue of which mere human beings could discern and definitely fix the presence of the kingdom. The thought is closely related to that expressed by Jesus in John 3:8, where He likewise refers to the inability of a man to observe the inner activity of the Spirit of God. The translation "within you" is in exact agreement with the *ἐντὸς ὑμῶν* of the text, and the rendering "in your midst" is contrary to the first part of the Lord's statement. Luther's explanation is clearly in full agreement with the text, when he states: "This is as much as to say: The kingdom of Christ does not consist in external things, localities, persons, works, but, as He there states, 'the kingdom of God is *within you*' [not merely 'in your midst']. Whence it does not follow that Christ is nowhere, but that He is everywhere and fills all things, Eph. 1:23." (*Against the Heavenly Prophets*. St. Louis Ed., XX: 282 f.) That the expression "within you" refers to the sum total of the gracious gifts of Christ, as they have become the property of the Christians by faith, Luther shows in a powerful sermon delivered on the day of Saint Barbara (XI:1928 f.): "The kingdom of God, by which He rules over all believers and as a faithful king shields, rebukes, rewards, leads them, etc., and they on their part put their entire trust in Him, willingly receive His fatherly discipline and rebuke and in all things give Him obedience, is not worldly or temporal, but spiritual, is not eating or drinking, Rom. 14:17, or any external thing, but only righteousness, satisfaction, and consolation of the human heart and conscience. Therefore it is nothing other than forgiveness or the putting away of sins, by which the consciences are contaminated, distressed, and troubled. For just as a worldly, temporal kingdom consists in this, that people live quietly and can peaceably obtain their sustenance together, even so the kingdom of God grants such things in the spiritual field; it destroys the kingdom of sin and is really nothing but a cancellation

and forgiveness of sins. God rules in the hearts by bringing peace, quiet, comfort through His Word, just as sin produces the opposite, namely, disturbance, anxiety, and trouble. Herein God gives evidence of His glory and grace in this life, in that He takes away and forgives the sins of men: *that is the kingdom of grace.*" This meaning of the word "kingdom" is evidently included also in other passages, as when Scripture speaks of the Gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23), when the call is issued: "The kingdom of God is at hand: Repent" (Mark 1:15), when Jesus declares: "The kingdom of God is come unto you" (Luke 10:9, 11), and when Jesus, in various parables refers to the hidden power of the Word or its beauty and precious value (Matt. 13:33, 44, 45).

On the basis of these and other Scripture passages we might formulate a definition of the concept "kingdom of God" in its real significance as follows: The expression "kingdom of God" is used in Scripture not primarily with regard to persons in their own status and in their relationship to one another, but of the rule of the Savior by the Gospel in the hearts of the believers and with reference to the purpose of His kingdom, the emphasis being on His gracious power rather than upon the obedience of His subjects. The kingdom of God in its relation to the believers is the rule of the Savior in the hearts of the Christians effected through the forgiveness of their sins, the consummation of this rule to take place in the kingdom of glory. This kingdom in its very nature is invisible, because both faith and the working of the Spirit in the hearts of men are spiritual and hence in themselves invisible. — Let us keep this definition in mind, for it will be needed again in our further discussion, when we study the essence of the Church.

In offering the definition given above, we are fully aware of the fact that the concept of the "kingdom," as applied to

situations here on earth, occasionally refers to the sum total of the believers. It is a common metonymy. Thus Jesus gives the explanation, with reference to the Parable of the Sower: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom" (Matt. 12:38), where He clearly has in mind those who have accepted the Word, the true Christians. The same meaning is found in references of the Apostle Paul, such as in Col. 1:13 ("hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son"); Col. 4:11 ("my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God"), and elsewhere. In some of the passages in this category the connotation comes very close to that of the first definition.

We must even state that the word "kingdom" is occasionally applied to a group of confessors of the Lord, although at least some of these are not in inner relation with Him. Thus the "children of the kingdom" in Matt. 8:12 are plainly those who were outwardly in communion with the true believers of the Old Covenant, although they themselves were not in spiritual fellowship with the Lord of the Covenant. And in the Parable of the Net (Matt. 13:47 ff.) the Lord speaks of the kingdom of heaven as it appears in the sight of men and not according to its real essence. Only those are members of the kingdom in the true sense of the word who are subject to the King in every respect and without reservations. Disloyalty to the Lord in any way, shape, or form results in expulsion from His spiritual kingdom. These points must be kept in mind throughout the discussion.

Let us now turn to the concept "church" as we find it in the New Testament. The word which here engages our attention is *ἐκκλησία*, a designation which is found more than one hundred times from Matthew to Revelation. In Acts 19:39 f. it clearly has the meaning which it also has in classical Greek, for it is used of the called meeting of the citi-

zens of a Greek city. In all other passages in which it occurs it refers to the congregation, or church, of believers in some sense, and herein lies the challenge of the term. It appears at once that the connotation of the classical usage must be assumed in every instance, namely, that of an organizational unity or entity, never of a random assembly, of a group which just happened to be in a certain place by some coincidence. The strength of the verb *καλεῖν* has evidently not been lost in forming the noun.

The concept "church" in the field of Christian dogmatics is chiefly that of the *una sancta catholica ecclesia*, the sum total of all believers in the whole world who have by faith received the redemption wrought by Christ and have thereby become citizens in the kingdom of grace, members of the body of Christ. This understanding and definition is based chiefly on the Letter to the Ephesians, that marvelous hymn of the holy Christian Church. In Eph. 1:22 f. we read: "And [God] hath put all things under His [Christ's] feet and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." If Christ, according to this passage, is the Head of the *ekklesia*, or Church, and if the latter is His body, then the Church in the true or primary sense of the term is the sum total of all those who are united with Christ, as the members of the body are connected and united with their head. A careful study of Eph. 5:23-27 leads to the same conclusions, for here the facts connected with Christ's vicarious redemption, as a result of which sanctification and glory are given to the Church, are made the basis of the relation between Christ and His Church. The Church consists of those who have received the redemption, the vicarious atonement of Christ. Several passages in the Letter to the Colossians present the same truths. In chapter 1:18 we read: "And He [Christ] is the Head of the body, the Church." And in

verse 24 of the same chapter the Church is again called the (spiritual) body of Christ. The same thought is presented in Rom. 12:5: "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." In 1 Cor. 3:16 f. we read: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." So the temple of God is considered as one large building, comprising the sum total of all believers, both individually and in their totality holy through the imputation of Christ's meritorious work. This passage is of primary importance in our discussion, as the entire context clearly shows. For the Apostle's warning urges all Christians to build only on the one foundation, Jesus Christ, and the use of wood, hay, stubble, in this process does not meet with the favor of the Lord. The defilement of the holy temple of God is regarded as such a serious offense as to draw down upon the offender the severe punishment of God. Further passages for earnest consideration are found in Eph. 2:19-22; John 11:51 f.; John 17:11, 20 f.; 1 Pet. 2:9 f. We note here that the spiritual nature of the Church is emphasized throughout and hence also its invisible character, a fact brought out with unmistakable clarity also in 2 Tim. 2:19: "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." He alone knows the membership of the *una sancta*, since He alone knows the hearts of men and sees the faith of their hearts. If He, in His acceptance of members in the body of Christ, has set a minimum standard, extending the assurance of His grace also to the broken reed and the smoking flax, if He is satisfied, for the purposes of this membership, with a knowledge and confession which is no more comprehensive than that of the thief's on the cross, that is His concern. In this field of discussion we are not permitted

to be guided by human speculation. We believe in the holy Christian Church as the communion of saints.

It may not be superfluous, at this point, to introduce a few quotations from our Lutheran Confessions. The Large Catechism: "I believe that there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one Head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind, and one understanding." (*Concordia Triglotta*, 691.) Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "And it says *Church Catholic* in order that we may not understand the Church to be an outward government of certain nations . . . but rather men scattered throughout the whole world . . . who agree concerning the Gospel, and have the same Christ, the same Holy Ghost, and the same Sacraments. . . . Therefore the Church, which is truly the kingdom of Christ, is properly the congregation of saints." (*Concordia Triglotta*, 231.) Smalcald Articles: "For, thank God, [today] a child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd." (*Concordia Triglotta*, 499.) Our Confessions do not stress the amount or the comprehensiveness of the knowledge required for membership in the *una sancta*; they do not state that the admixture of saint worship, for example, completely vitiates a layman's relation to the vicarious atonement; they do not say that the acceptance of seven Sacraments instead of two, if this is done without deliberate denial of the truth, out of sheer ignorance, will exclude a person from the kingdom of grace; they also do not say that ignorance of many parts of the revealed truth will nullify membership in the Church of Christ. Our dogmaticians refer to a happy inconsistency, by virtue of which even a teacher of the Church holding (and teaching) a false view on some point of doctrine will not hold this error as his heart's belief or permit it to vitiate his entire theology,

as it logically might do. But all such considerations cannot change our definition of the Church in its real essence.

At this point we approach the actual difficulty, the crux in the doctrine of the Church which causes so much confusion in the minds of those who are not fully clear on the difference between the invisible and the so-called visible Church. The difficulty consists in this, that men have associated certain aspects and factors which properly pertain to the invisible Church alone with visible groups or assemblies which also, by a metonymy (*contentum pro contento*) are designated as the Christian Church or as individual congregations. As a matter of fact, no one who is not gifted with omniscience can have a conception of the degree of doctrinal knowledge or of the degree of the purity of that knowledge which God requires for membership in the *una sancta*. We also know that the Holy Ghost works only through truth, the truth of the Word of God, John 17:17; yet the Parable of the Tares clearly indicates that the devil may counteract and vitiate the truth. It must be our thesis, therefore, *a priori*, that God expects a 100-per-cent degree of doctrinal purity in the *publica doctrina* of each and every church body or of the sum total of them if they really want to remain in the picture as a foil or background for the Church in the real sense of the term.

That various groups of confessors of the Christian truth are only a background and foil of the *ekklesia* in the strict sense of the term, the *una sancta*, is evident from the manner in which Scripture speaks of the members of such groups, who are, in a manner of speaking, the vessel, or receptacle, in which the *communio sanctorum* is contained. When the Apostles address their letters to the congregations, for example, they use the designations "beloved of God," "saints," "faithful," "elect," "those who have obtained like precious faith," Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1;

Col. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:1. In speaking of the Church, therefore, specifically of the Christian congregation, our presentation should always be in conformity with that of Holy Scripture. We must always stress the *essence*, or substance, of the Church (and therefore also of the individual congregation), keeping in mind that every Christian congregation consists *essentially of nothing but saints*. Among those saints in the individual congregation as well as those scattered throughout the earth the conditions of the *una sancta* obtain: they are all members of the one Church and therefore of the body of Jesus, their Lord; they are united in spiritual fellowship with Him; they pray for and with one another; they function together as organs of the one spiritual body whose Head is Christ. See 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Gal. 3:26-28; Col. 3:11. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession correctly states: "For the true kingdom of Christ, the true assembly of Christ, are and ever remain those whom the Spirit of God has illuminated, strengthens, rules, although it is not yet revealed before the world, but is hidden under the cross." (From the German text, *Concordia Triglotta*, 232, § 19.)

But this communion of saints, *contained in* (ἐντός) the visible groups of such as confess the Christian faith, is *not to be identified with such groups*. The vessel, or receptacle, although closely related to, is not to be identified with its contents. Scripture indeed employs the same word, ἐκκλησία, for the spiritual body, the Church in the real sense of the word, and for the individual groups of confessors of the Christian faith, and yet it maintains the distinction between the two concepts. This distinction acquires an even greater significance from the fact that the word is applied, in by far the greater number of passages, to a local group of believers or confessors. In more than ninety instances it refers to the local congregation, as in Acts 5:11; 8:3; 1 Cor. 4:17;

Phil. 4:15; the congregation at Jerusalem, Acts 8:1; at Cenchreae, Rom. 16:1; at Corinth, 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; at Thessalonica, 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; cp. Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14. This meaning of the term is unquestionably substantiated in more than forty passages in which the word is used in the plural, as in Acts 15:41; 16:5; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 8:18 f., 23 f.; Gal. 1:22; 1 Thess. 2:14; 1 Cor. 16:1, 19; 2 Cor. 8:1; and in particular in Acts 14:23 (cp. Tit. 1:5).

According to more than ninety pertinent passages in the New Testament the local Christian congregation is not a merely occasional or temporary, much less a mere fortuitous gathering of Christians, a more or less accidental meeting of such as profess Christianity, but the word designates an association of Christians who are living in a certain place for a longer period of time, the purpose of such association being the exercise of the rights of the spiritual priesthood in a public manner (*von Gemeinschafts wegen*). In speaking of local Christian congregations in this way, we do so in the full consciousness of the distinction between the invisible and the visible Church (the Church in the proper and in the figurative sense), also of the fact that in both cases the real membership of the Church (or congregation) is made up of believers only. Aside from this we say that all questions pertaining to the formal organization of Christian congregations, including the formal exercise of its God-given rights and the entire manner of conducting the business of the congregation, are matters of historical development and local needs.

That this concept of the local Christian congregation is in full harmony with the Word of God and expresses the order established by Him is apparent, apart from the points already mentioned, from the following facts: a. that the Word of God presupposes a longer duration of time for the existence and the functions of a Christian congregation, in

particular with reference to the growth of such a congregation (Acts 2:47 c; 6:7; 21:17, 20); b. that the work connected with the establishment and growth of a congregation necessarily took some time, this being true whether one of the Apostles or some other teacher was in charge (Acts 11:26; 14:23; 18:11; 20:18, 31; cp. also James 2:2; Heb. 10:25); c. that individual, local congregations were provided with servants of the Word (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) and that individual, local congregations elected delegates, who in their name constituted a committee for the relief of the poor (Acts 20:4 f.; 1 Cor. 16:3; this committee not being arbitrarily appointed by the Apostle Paul nor chosen by a group or synod); d. that even the names which Scripture applies to the incumbents of the ministerial office clearly indicate God's order to have the local congregation in charge of the calling of such servants: a pastor or shepherd (Acts 20:29; 1 Pet. 5:2) presupposes a definite flock; a servant presupposes a definite family or group to whom he ministers (2 Cor. 3:6); moreover the *presbyteroi*, like the *episkopoi*, are distinctly connected with local congregations (Titus 1:5; Hebr. 13:17); the bishop is associated with an individual congregation (1 Tim. 3:1, 5); and when the size of the congregation necessitated several ministers of the Word, they were nevertheless responsible to the one local congregation (Acts 20:17, 28); e. that with regard to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Scripture definitely places the local congregation in charge (1 Cor. 11:18, 20 ff.), not a fortuitous assembly of Christians coming from various congregations or belonging to no congregation at all; f. that in cases of church discipline only such an association of Christians can function in keeping with the will of God as are united in a more or less coherent local group (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:2, 13b; 2 Cor. 2:5-10); g. that even in the apostolic age a letter of commendation for a brother was addressed to an individual congregation (2 John 9; Col. 4:10).

On the basis of these and other clear passages of Holy Scripture we are constrained to conclude and to judge that it is God's will and order that the individual, local congregation is the functioning unit in exercising the Office of the Keys and that only this group is empowered to establish the office of the ministry and to call a pastor, or pastors for the public exercise of ministerial duties, as this has been provided for in the Word of God. In making this statement we differentiate sharply between the rights of the universal priesthood as they find their expression in the Christian home, in the relation of Christians among one another, in the observation of the Great Commission outside the local congregation, and, on the other hand, between the functions which the Christian congregation by virtue of the call issued by the authority vested in it extends to the called servants of the Word (and his assistants), namely, the public administration of the means of grace, that is, in the name of the entire congregation.

We now ask: Why this emphasis on the authority of the individual congregation as the self-governing body? The answer is: a. Because the discipline which should be exercised in the Christian Church, according to Matt. 18, is specifically associated with the local congregation, as indicated above; b. Because the same thing is true with regard to the watchfulness which is associated with the purity of doctrine presented in the public preaching of a congregation (Acts 17:11); c. Because even prayer, although associated with the functions of fellowship existing within the *una sancta*, is nevertheless specifically connected with the local congregation (Acts 4:23-31; 12:5, 12); d. Because both the collecting and the distributing of money to be used for charitable purposes was connected with individual congregations (1 Cor. 16:1-3; Acts 11:27-30 and 12:25; 20:4).

In presenting the Scriptural teaching in this manner, we safeguard the rights and the privileges of the universal priesthood, on the one hand, and correctly evaluate the functions of the communion of saints as exercised through the Christian congregation, on the other. And this presentation receives further support by the fact that Scripture frequently, by way of a common metonymy, as stated above, refers to groups, or corporate bodies, known as congregations, or churches (*ekklesiai*) as functioning bodies in the economy of the Kingdom. Just as the kingdom of heaven is described in the parables of Jesus in agreement with its membership before men, so that tares and foolish virgins and a man which had not on a wedding garment are included in its corporate group (Matt. 13:47 f.; 25:1 f.; 22: 2, 11), so also congregations are pictured as they appear in the sight of men, when it may very well be true that hypocrites and unbelievers may have their names on the roster of members. The figure of speech with which we are here concerned is the *synekdoche*. The man guilty of incest in the congregation at Corinth was still on the roll when Paul addressed the group, though his sin had cut him off from the *una sancta* (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 13). In writing to the Galatians, Saint Paul declares: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace" (chap. 5:4); yet he addressed the entire membership as churches. It is in agreement with Scripture, therefore, when our Confessions take account of the admixture of non-believers in the outward group, or corporate body, known as the Church (or the Christian congregation). Augsburg Confession: "Although the Church *properly* is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith. . . ." (Art. VIII. *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 47.) Apology: "Christ also speaks of the out-

ward appearance of the Church when He says (Matt. 13:47): The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, likewise, to ten virgins; and He teaches that the Church has been covered by a multitude of evils, in order that this stumbling block might not offend the pious." (*Op. cit.*, p. 233.) Again: "Yet we confess that in this life many hypocrites and wicked men, mingled with these, have the fellowship of outward signs, who are members of the Church according to this fellowship of outward signs." (*Ibid.*, 237.)

II

It is a significant fact, in this connection, that the admonitions to maintain unity and to be separate from error are addressed first of all to congregations, that they presuppose primarily a congregational framework. This is certainly the case in 1 Cor. 1:10, where Paul speaks of the deplorable lack of unity in the work of the Church. It is the case even in Eph. 4:3, no matter if one should insist on regarding this as a circular letter. From the pivot of the individual congregation the Apostles extend their admonitions to include the true believers everywhere.

For we have abundant evidence, especially of an historical kind, that the Lord wanted any existing unity of the spirit, as He demanded it in every local group of Christians, to manifest itself toward all men of the same faith everywhere. He wanted an existing common faith to be recognized mutually, so that the Word and will of God would be accepted as the guiding principle in all church affairs. When Peter and John were sent to Samaria shortly after Philip the Evangelist had done his missionary work in that section of Palestine, it was for the purpose of receiving full confirmation of the existing unity of confession and faith, and the result was the recognition and exercise of this

fellowship. (Acts 8:14 ff.) We have the same situation in Acts 15, since we there have the account of a meeting of the congregation of Jerusalem with certain delegates of the congregation of Antioch. The assembly came to the conclusion that certain basic resolutions, agreed upon after careful deliberation, should be brought to the attention of all congregations involved. This assumption of power was associated with the fact that several of the Lord's chosen Apostles were in charge of the meeting and that the writers of the resolutions specifically make the Holy Ghost the responsible author of the letter (Acts 15:22-28). For this reason these resolutions were published also in other congregations and were referred to as occasion required (Acts 16:4. Cp. chap. 21:25). That fellowship relations based upon the acceptance of the teaching of the Apostles were acknowledged also in such congregations as may not have been founded by any Apostle in person appears from Acts 21:3, 7 (Tyre, Ptolemais), and especially from the fact of Paul's writing a letter to the congregation at Rome. (Rom. 15:20 ff.) Upon the basis of a full and unequivocal acceptance of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles rests also the practice of correcting a brother who was in error in a point of doctrine. (Acts 18:25 f.)

With this fellowship of a common confession and faith was connected also the co-operation of the early Christians in works of charity. When the famine which had been predicted by the Prophet Agabus materialized, early in the forties, the disciples of Antioch in Syria resolved to send relief to the brethren in Judea, the collection being delivered there by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:28-30; 12:25). When about the middle of the fifties another famine descended upon Palestine, the Apostle Paul persuaded the members of the congregations, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also those of Asia Proconsularis and

probably of Galatia, to collect larger sums of money, which were then taken to Jerusalem by a large committee of appointed or elected delegates (1 Cor. 16:1 ff.; 2 Cor. 8 and 9; Acts 20:4 f.).

But although Christian fellowship showed itself in this fine spirit of co-operation, we have no evidence of a larger synodical or ecclesiastical organization. There was apostolic direction, but the congregations clearly appear to have been autonomous throughout and that without being isolated. The situation is well presented by Lindsay (*The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, 156), when he writes: "Although each local church was an independent society, although it was not connected with other Christian communities by any organization of a political kind, it was nevertheless conscious that it belonged to a world-wide federation of equally independent churches. Its self-containedness did not produce isolation. On the contrary, every local church felt itself to be a real part of the universal and visible Church of God, to which many hundreds of similar societies belonged. 'All the churches of Christ,' said Tertullian, 'although they are so many and so great, comprise but one primitive Church . . . and are all proved to be one in unbroken unity by the *communicatio pacis et appellatio fraternitatis et contessaratio hospitalitatis*.' They kept the conception of this unity alive in their hearts by the thought that all shared the same Sacraments, were taught the same divine mysteries, obeyed the same commandments of God, and shared the same hope of the same kingdom." In other words, the essential attributes of the *una sancta* found at least a partial expression in the visible organizations, and the signs of the Church were present in the Word and the Sacraments. (For this entire section, compare the article "Luther ueber Kirche und Amt," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, X:432-449.)

All this is not a matter of an arbitrary arrangement on the part of men, for God Himself laid down the rules and regulations governing the relationship of such as profess the Christian faith toward one another. The chief principles of Holy Writ which are fundamental for the formulating of guidelines in the matter of our relation to other men professing the Christian religion (and, specifically, holding the position of the Lutheran Church) are the following: First of all, the Lord expects all Christians to strive earnestly to maintain the unity of faith, which is an attribute of the *una sancta* (Eph. 4:3). As stated above, Scripture clearly teaches the existence of this unity of all believers, whether they are members of a Christian organization, a corporate Christian body, or not. All believers in Christ and His atoning work are one in Him. This is true according to the statement in the high-priestly prayer of Jesus (John 17:21). It is true according to the teaching of Saint Paul, who tells the believers that they are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). The same truth is brought out in Eph. 2:19-22, where all the believers are described as being built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. But by the same token this essential unity in its perfect form is invisible in nature, because the Lord alone knoweth them that are His (2 Tim. 2:19).

III

Now, this inner unity, this spiritual oneness is to find its manifestation in an outer relationship between all those who truly profess the Word of God, as demanded by the clear command of the Lord, *e. g.*, John 8:31 f. Christians should be joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10b). Diversities of gifts there may be, but the same Spirit must be in charge always (1 Cor. 12:4). Again and again Scripture makes it a point to stress the

necessity of maintaining the unity of the spirit, if it actually exists. Brethren should dwell together in unity (Ps. 133:1). They are to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, although with the distinct understanding that they speak the truth and do nothing against the truth (Eph. 4:3, 15; 2 Cor. 13:8). They are to be one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32); they are to determine any existing unity of faith and confession and give expression to it (Acts 8:14 ff.; Acts 11:22-24; Acts 15): they are to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel (Phil. 1:27b).

It follows that this unity of the spirit, being a spiritual unity, which expresses itself by certain manifestations and tokens, is actually a *κοινωνία*, the condition of having something in common, of sharing it with another or others. The word is used in the New Testament of the fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), of the communion of the Holy Ghost (2 Cor. 13:13; Phil. 2:1), of the fellowship or common enjoyment of the Gospel (Phil. 1:5), of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10); and, in the negative sense, of the fellowship of light with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14; the verb is used in the same connotation in Eph. 5:10). Other passages stress the manifestation of a real or implied unity by the use of the noun *κοινωνία*. It is used of the close fellowship which characterized the congregation at Jerusalem (Acts 2:42); of the fellowship of the ministering to the saints in the matter of the collection for the sufferers in Palestine (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13); of the right hand of fellowship, to signify a complete agreement in the work of the Church (Gal. 2:9); of the manifestation of faith and the imparting of the fruit of faith (Philemon 6); of the fellowship which obtains between the Apostles and the believers to whom they address their letters (1 John 1:6). There is spiritual fellowship with the weak and erring, but not with the dis-

obedient and stubborn, as John himself shows (1 John 1:7; 2:18 ff.; 4:1-6). The whole attitude of this fellowship which the Lord desires is well summarized in the words of Saint Paul: "Fulfill ye my joy that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:2).

There are certain specific demonstrations of this unity and fellowship which are expressly named in Holy Scriptures. The cup of the Eucharist is described as the communion (*κοινωνία*) of the blood of Christ, and the bread as the communion of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16), the Apostle thereby clearly indicating that the unity of the spirit, the actual fellowship existing between Christians, has its counterpart in the fellowship of the earthly elements with the body and blood of the Lord bestowed in the Sacrament, as verse 17 states. The words of Schmauk are very pertinent at this point:

"Communion is more than union and more than fellowship. It is a union intensified into active fellowship. But the fellowship is not a mere subjective participation of feelings, taste, or conviction in the common life of another. It is a fellowship arising out of an objective ground provided by our Lord Jesus Christ in His redemption, constituting its participants into a special brotherhood, into which they are called by the Gospel. In it they are taken up into the brotherhood of the body of Christ, and in it they participate in the Holy Communion in receiving that real body. It is a brotherhood, not of feeling, or of subjective intellectual faith, or even of common conviction, but it is a brotherhood in the life and death of Christ as shared out to us in His Word and in the communication of His own body, which, so far as it is a visible act, becomes a distinguishing mark of brotherhood. It is more than fellowship, because it is not a fellowship on the ground of a common feeling or faith, but a feeling on the ground of a common brotherhood in Christ given to us in a common Word, and renewed, maintained, and manifested in a common participation in the actual body of Christ. Communion is union intensified. It is not merely an occasional sharing of one's self or one's feelings in a common and voluntary association of brotherhood, but it is an identification of our whole

life with the life of another in and through our brotherhood in Christ. It is a life fellowship on the basis of the greatest of life realities." (Sandt, *Biography of Theo. Em. Schmauk*, 264 f.)

There are other manifestations of this communion as it actually obtains between all true believers and should be practiced in keeping with the Word of God. Though there are diversities of gifts in the various members of the body of Christ, this fact should not tend toward division, but toward the highest expression of co-operation (1 Cor. 12: 4 ff.; Rom. 12:4 ff.), so that Christians do not forsake the assembling of themselves together, but seek such expressions of the unity which actuates them, the unity which Schmauk defines as "the oneness of constituent parts running through and binding all (however diverse in quality) to singleness of purpose, plan, and activity. It is the spontaneous and yet necessary co-operation of all the members on the basis of a fundamental and dominating principle which results not only in organic harmony of existence, but in a singleness of outward action." (*Op. cit.*, p. 264.) It follows that outward fellowship, though based on the inward spiritual fellowship, is not necessarily identical with it. Not all those who are in external fellowship with a corporate body or denomination are by that token alone participants in the universal Christian fellowship, and not all who are in inner fellowship in and with Christ are also in external fellowship with some Christian denomination.

In its insistence upon having Christians use all zeal to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of faith, Scripture very emphatically denounces all those who disrupt this unity and will not practice fellowship where doctrinal agreement exists. With regard to sectarians, separatists, and schismatics we have the Lord's judgment upon those who walk no more with their Lord (John 6:66), of whom Saint John says: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if

they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19). We have Saint Paul's condemnation of those who caused divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which the Roman Christians had learned (Rom. 16:17); we have his complaint regarding those who concerning faith have made shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19), who depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits (1 Tim. 4:1); who turned from him (2 Tim. 1:15). A similar condemnation of the Lord is recorded in the case of those who reject the Scriptural principles regarding Christian fellowship and find their delight in a contentious spirit (1 Cor. 1:11; 11:19). Saint Peter likewise condemns the actions of those which have forsaken the right way and are gone astray (2 Pet. 2:15); and this judgment is echoed in Jude 19.

The position taken by Scripture with regard to the manifestation of true unity requires the observation of certain rules. For one thing, all Christians are urged to exercise all patience over against such as err from weakness or ignorance, and to make every effort to bring them to the full and correct understanding of the truth. This is indicated even in Ezek. 34:16, in the description of the Divine Shepherd's care of the weak and wounded. (Cp. Is. 42:3.) Saint Paul says of himself: "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). In introducing the subject of the unity of the spirit, the Apostle admonishes his readers to "forbear one another in love" (Eph. 4:2). In 1 Thess. 5:14 the same Apostle admonishes: "Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." Even when the matter of an erring brother has reached the stage when the true confessors no longer may have company with him, yet efforts to win him for the

truth should not cease. (2 Thess. 3:14 f.) Hence the position taken by the Apology of the Augsburg Confession is altogether Biblical: "On the other hand, perfection,* *i. e.*, the integrity of the Church, is preserved, when the strong bear with the weak . . . when the bishops make some allowances for the weakness of the people [know how to exercise forbearance to the people, according to circumstances, with respect to all kinds of weaknesses and faults]. Of these precepts of equity the books of all the wise are full, namely, that in everyday life we should make many allowances mutually for the sake of common tranquillity. And of this, Paul frequently teaches both here and elsewhere." (*Concordia Triglotta*, 185, § 113 f.) And again: "Nor was it without design that the Apostle taught so frequently concerning this office what the philosophers call *ἐπιείκεια*, leniency. For this virtue is necessary for retaining public harmony [in the Church and the civil government], which cannot last unless pastors and Churches mutually overlook and pardon many things." (*Op. cit.*, p. 189.)

We must be reminded here, of course, that it is one thing to bear with the weakness and ignorance of men, and quite another thing to condone false teaching and to permit error to rule in the Church. Having patience with the weak may never be tantamount to the acknowledgment of any denial of so much as one statement of the Bible. A deficiency in knowledge and a weakness in understanding may and should be excused; but no confessing Christian, and particularly no teacher of the Church, much less an entire denomination, can be permitted to deny the truth and to uphold a false confession and a false practice. Weakness dare not demand the right of existence and must not be acknowledged as the norm. All those who deliberately falsify the

* The German text adds: and unity.

truth and depart from the Word of God place themselves under His condemnation. See John 8:31, 32, 43, 45; Acts 20:30 f.; Gal. 5:9; 2 John 10 f.

While we are, therefore, under obligation to exercise all patience with those who err from weakness, the Lord demands separation from errorists, when all attempts to have them bow to the truth of God's Word have proved futile. The Apostle's words are clear and unmistakable: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid them*" (Rom. 16:17). "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing . . . from such *withdraw thyself*" (1 Tim. 6:3-5). "Avoiding profane and vain babblings" (1 Tim. 6:20. Cp. 2 Tim. 2:16-18). "Avoid foolish questions. . . . A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself" (Titus 3:9-11).

These admonitions and warnings in the Word of God are issued on the basis of the inviolability of this Word. Hence we find also the condemnation of God upon every denial of the truth as given to men by Him, whether this be by way of open rejection of His Word or by the ignoring and condoning of error. We have an array of passages in the Bible concerning God's denunciation of error and its consequences which ought to make every student of the Bible draw back in horror from even the slightest departure from any part of the revealed truth, be it ever so insignificant in the eyes of men. Saint Paul addresses the Galatians: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Chap. 3:1.) And again: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Chap. 4:16.) And again, with his finger, as it were, raised in warn-

ing: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (chap. 5:9). And Saint John takes the same position, when he writes: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. . . . We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:1, 6). And again: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 10:11). All this is based upon the attitude taken also by Christ: "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not. . . . He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:45, 47). Some who are anxious for union among the various churches and synods seem to overlook this one point in particular, namely, that identifying oneself with those who openly espouse the cause of error makes one guilty of the errorist's sin, a partaker of his evil deed in denying the truth of the Word of God.

In setting forth these truths from the Word of God we constantly keep in mind that a refusal to practice fellowship with certain confessors of the Christian faith who hold erroneous views and doctrines is not identical with a denial of their membership in the body of Christ. For that relationship is invisible, intangible to mere human beings; it is a matter between the individual and the omniscient Lord of the Church. Factors such as a happy inconsistency, namely, when the faith of the heart does not agree with the confession of the mouth or the constructions of the head, or of perpetuating an error of a certain church body in a more or less mechanical fashion, or that of indifference (if this can be condoned by God in view of man's weakness), or of fatigue, that is, of the weariness which is apt to take hold of the hearts of men when they see the apparent futility of

continuing doctrinal discussions which seem to be leading nowhere — all these factors are in the hands of God, who will certainly adjust them according to His wisdom and mercy.

But as for all Christians who feel in duty bound to operate under the rules of God's inviolable Word and the directions concerning church fellowship laid down therein: If we ignore and set aside these clear teachings and warnings, then the Church will inevitably be confronted with the evil of unionism. Any and every practice of Christian fellowship, every form of mutual recognition which is not based upon a full agreement concerning the Bible as the infallible, absolute norm of doctrine and life and of all its teachings as requiring acceptance on the part of every Christian, is contrary to God's will. We may, in a given case, acknowledge and concede a fellowship in essentials, which is, in effect, an acknowledgment of a basic Christianity. But we may, at the same time, be compelled, on the strength of an accident, namely, the unwillingness of others to accept Scripture in all its parts and in all its teachings, to refuse the practice of fellowship. If we yield in this point, real unity will not be effected. All attempts to force the issue by simulating a unity and practicing a fellowship which does not exist are bound to result in failure and tragedy, as the history of all such union movements abundantly demonstrates, for the denial of even one clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures may lead to a compromise with error in the very fundamentals, and the final result may be a greater disunity than before.

What conclusions are we bound to draw from this exposition from the Word of God? We may well summarize as follows: .

1. Unity is a quality or attribute which is specifically predicated of the *una sancta*.

2. This unity of the spirit should, according to the will of God, also be found in the so-called visible Church (or the churches).

3. In striving for this unity in its expression as Christian fellowship the inviolability of Scripture must be the point of departure.

4. Weakness and ignorance may be borne for a reasonable length of time but can never be condoned or become a permanent condition.

5. Every kind or degree of error vitiates and nullifies the unity of the spirit and renders true fellowship impossible if persisted in and perpetuated.

6. No form of outward union, amalgamation, or even federation will effect true unity.

7. Forcing the issue by the premature practice of altar fellowship, pulpit fellowship, and prayer fellowship will make the attainment of true unity extremely difficult, if not impossible.

In this connection we cannot refrain from quoting a paragraph from Krauth's *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*, 195 f.: "Somewhere on earth, if the gates of hell have not prevailed against the Church, there is a Communion whose fellowship involves no departure from a solitary article of Christian faith – and no man should be willing to be united with any other Communion. The man who is sure there is no such Communion is bound to put forth the effort to originate it. He who knows of no Creed which is true to the Rule of Faith, in all its articles, should at once prepare one that is. Every Christian is bound either to find a Church on earth, pure in its whole faith, or to make one. . . . When error is admitted into the Church, it will be found that the stages of its progress are always three. It begins by asking *toleration*. Its friends say to the majority: You

need not be afraid of us; we are few, and weak; only let us alone; we shall not disturb the faith of others. The Church has her standards of doctrine; of course we shall never interfere with them; we only ask for ourselves to be spared interference with our private opinions. Indulged in this for a time, error goes on to assert *equal rights*. Truth and error are two balancing forces. The Church shall do nothing which looks like deciding between them; that would be partiality. It is bigotry to assert any superior right for the truth. We are to agree to differ, and any favoring of the truth, because it is truth, is partisanship. What the friends of truth and error hold in common is fundamental. Anything on which they differ is *ipso facto* non-essential. Anybody who takes account of such a thing is a disturber of the peace of the Church. Truth and error are two co-ordinate powers, and the great secret of church statesmanship is to preserve the balance between them. From this point error soon goes on to its natural end, which is to assert *supremacy*. Truth started with *tolerating*; it comes to be merely tolerated, and that only for a time. Error claims a preference for its judgments on all disputed points. It puts men into positions, not as at first in spite of their departure from the Church's faith, but in consequence of it. Their recommendation is that they repudiate that faith, and position is given them to teach others to repudiate it, and to make them skillful in combating it."

CHAPTER VI

What About Doctrinal Aberrations?

Holding fast the form of sound words. 2 TIM. 1:13

I

THE discussion of the topic presented in this chapter presupposes the unequivocal acceptance of the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, as set forth in a previous chapter, with a full agreement as to the inerrancy of the Bible in all its parts, whether doctrinal or historical or even pertaining to matters which we commonly include in the domain of the natural sciences; in other words, the sanctity and inviolability of every statement included in the canonical corpus of the Bible. This means that all statements of Holy Writ, penned as they were by that unique and miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit to which the Scriptural term inspiration is applied (primarily in the sense of *immediate and absolute impartation*), must be regarded and accepted as God's own words, with the attitude of the inspired writers themselves, who were constrained to search what or what man-

ner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify (1 Pet. 1:11). It means also that all sections of the Sacred Record which were penned by the holy writers on the basis of *historical knowledge or research* were nevertheless, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, so sifted that nothing but the full truth was offered, in the very words which He Himself directed the writers to use from their vocabulary, as He wanted to make it known to men (Luke 1:4; where we should also keep in mind that the primary, that is, the etymological meaning of the word *ἀνωθεν* is "from above"). It means, furthermore, that the very *quotations* included in the canonical books of the Bible were selected under the guidance of the Spirit, even if these quotations were made from heathen authors, and that they were occasionally marked by His specific approval, as in Titus 1:12 f. It means, finally, that the Holy Ghost, in the process of inspiration, took into account the occupational background, the vocational environment, the mental ability, the emotional condition and congruity, and other characteristic factors of the writers selected by Him so as to produce writings which were as diversified as the human writers differed from one another (thereby appealing also to a diversity of readers), and yet present a unity of thought and content over a period of more than fifteen hundred years which is absolutely unique in the history of the world's literature.

With this presupposition as to the attitude of our readers toward the Bible we may undertake to analyze and apply the admonition of the Apostle Paul which we have made the caption of this chapter. He speaks of a basic form of sound or healthful words, thereby referring clearly to his own teaching in the Church, the proclamation of the truth of the Holy Scriptures as it had been transmitted to him (1 Cor. 2:13; 15:3; Gal. 1:12). In keeping with this apostolic ad-

monition, as supported by the entire tenor of demands made by Holy Writ itself, we proceed from the supposition that *every statement* of the Bible, being a part of the inspired record, must be regarded as a truth to be accepted, as a bit of divine information intended for our learning and edification. Biblically speaking, every statement, every saying of the Bible has a doctrinal content or purpose for us; it is something which we as Christians must accept and believe. This is evident even from the use of the word *saying* in the Authorized Version, as in John 8:55; 12:38; 15:20; Rom. 13:9; 14:24; Rev. 19:9. It is particularly important to remember that our Savior was operating with a comparatively insignificant historical statement when He uttered the great principle that the Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35). Cp. Ps. 82:6. The same emphasis is associated with the fact that Saint Paul bases one of his great arguments in proving Christ to be the Messiah upon the use of a noun in the singular (Gal. 3:16). Cp. Gen. 22:18. Whether any statement found in any book of the Bible, from the standpoint of doctrine pertaining to salvation, be relatively important or unimportant, whether it be in the field of history or archaeology, or geography, or the sciences: it is a part of the eternal, divine truth, and has some bearing on our relation to God. See 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Rom. 15:4a.

However, ecclesiastical custom, influenced, to a large degree, by Biblical usage, has given special connotations to certain terms, and for that reason it will be well to examine a few of these terms. The Biblical text has the words *διδασκαλία*, teaching, and *διδασχῆ*, doctrine. The terms are practically synonymous, in most instances, although the context, in many cases, adds certain features to the understanding of the words. As an hour's careful work with a Greek concordance will show, either term may have reference to one unit of teaching presentation, and either term may

denote an entire section or body of doctrine. In Matt. 15:9 and Col. 2:22, for example, *διδασκαλία* is used in the plural and refers to commandments or precepts, whereas in Rom. 12:7 and in approximately thirteen passages in the Pastoral Letters a body of teaching is evidently implied, especially in the cases where the noun is modified by the adjective "sound," or "healthy." The word *διδαχή* likewise indicates, in some instances, the general form and the process of teaching, as in Matt. 7:28 (cp. Mark 4:2), whereas in the majority of instances the content of the teaching is meant, as in John 7:16; 18:19; Acts 2:42; 5:28; Titus 1:9, and particularly in Rom. 6:17, where the Apostle speaks of the form or type of doctrine "which was delivered you." Such a *corpus doctrinae* is clearly meant also in 2 Tim. 3:14; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 2:1, 7. Thus the Bible evidently distinguishes between individual points, or *loci*, of teaching as doctrines and the entire body of Christian teaching as doctrine, in the collective sense, and the same distinction is observed in theological parlance to this day.

If we speak of *doctrine* in the singular, in ecclesiastical usage, we refer to the presentation of a Scriptural truth in a formal or logical statement, not necessarily in the exact words of the Bible, but reproducing the teaching of the Bible according to correct logical thinking, in the form of conclusions which are in full agreement with the text of Holy Scriptures.* Thus our Synodical Catechism, under the doctrine "Of Sin," states that "sin is every departure from the rule of the divine Law." (Qu. 92.) This is practically identical with the Biblical statement: "Sin is the transgression of the Law" (1 John 3:4). In other cases, however, the Bible, in one or several statements, offers only partial def-

* This point was treated in detail in Chapter 3, but we are including a reference to this important distinction here, for the sake of completeness.

initions rather than a compact, comprehensive, logical statement of the doctrine concerned. For example, our definition of justification is a statement of this type: Justification is that forensic act of God by which He, on the basis of the perfect vicarious atonement wrought by Christ, declares the whole world to be justified in His sight (objective justification) and transmits and imputes the effect of this declaration to all whom He brings to faith by the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace (subjective justification). Nowhere in Scripture have we the doctrine of justification presented in this logical form, and yet our definition comprehends in one sentence what is clearly taught in Rom. 3:23-28; Eph. 2:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 8:33; 4:5, and many other passages.

The same holds true with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. The Scriptural truth is beautifully and adequately presented in the Athanasian Creed: "That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity: neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance, etc." Yet the Bible nowhere has a brief and comprehensive statement of this fundamental doctrine.* On the basis of the clear presentation of this doctrine in the New Testament we do not hesitate to make the application also to passages of the Old Testament, knowing that we are fully supported by the truth of Holy Writ, which is indivisible, a doctrinal unit.

That a conclusion based on the normal processes of human reasoning may well have the status of a doctrine may be learned from the masterful, if striking, manner in which Jesus proves the doctrine of the resurrection in Matt. 22:31 f. Surely no one would otherwise suppose that Ex. 3:6, 16 contains a clear argument for the resurrection of the dead.

* The *Comma Johanneum* (1 John 5:7) has been conclusively shown to be a later interpolation. Cp. *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol. IV, p. 349 f.

In a similar way Jesus presented other doctrines of the Bible on the basis of logical deductions, as in Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4-6; John 10:34-36. We refer to this although we know that we, as mere human beings, must employ ordinary human reasoning.

The three examples given above belong to the group of fundamental articles of faith, which we shall presently define. But the principle applies also to non-fundamental articles of belief, of which we shall speak more fully presently. For example, the well-known declaration *Papam esse verum Antichristum* is a doctrinal statement of the Lutheran Confessions and was promulgated by many other teachers of the Church, both before and after the Protestant Reformation, as they clearly saw the import of the Scriptural statements in 2 Thess. 2 and in 1 John 2 and 4, as compared with the prophetic descriptions in Daniel and in the Apocalypse, which induced them to make the exposition and fearlessly to draw the conclusions which follow. Smalcald Articles: "The errors of the kingdom of the Pope are manifest. And *Scripture* with its entire voice exclaims that these errors are a teaching of demons and of Antichrist." (*Concordia Triglotta*, 517, § 42.) The logical conclusions which resulted in the presentation of the doctrine of the Antichrist have their exact counterpart in the manner in which Jesus Himself and later His Apostles argued for the Messiahship of Christ. When the deputation of John the Baptist appeared before Him, Jesus did not declare in so many words: "I am the Messiah, the Christ," but pointed to the prophecies which were being fulfilled in His ministry (Luke 7:19 f.; Matt. 11:3 ff.). The same procedure was followed by Peter, in his great Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, by Paul, in his teaching in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13), and by Apollos in Corinth (Acts 18:28). So with regard to the Antichrist. Luther and his co-workers were fully aware of the fact

that the Bible does not specifically state: "The Pope of Rome is the Antichrist," but they also knew that the description which Scripture gives of the Antichrist cannot possibly apply to any other phenomenon in history than that of the Papacy. Hence the statement of our Confession that "Scripture with its entire voice exclaims that these errors are the teaching of . . . Antichrist" is a doctrine of the Lutheran Church. It is a matter of simple identification. — So much for the present, in a general way, on the subject of Scripture doctrine.

But what about the distinction made in the field of theology between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines? Just what importance or significance attaches to this nomenclature? Briefly speaking, *fundamental* doctrines, in *Christian dogmatics*, are those which form the *corpus doctrinae* proper, that is, the foundation of Christian faith in its relation to the sinner's salvation, comprising all the doctrines which must necessarily be known to the believing Christian, although the grades of this necessity are not the same (nor the degree of consciousness with which they are understood, as in the case of baptized infants).^{*} Hence we divide the fundamental doctrines into *primary* fundamental doctrines, or such whose acceptance is absolutely essential to salvation (justification by faith alone, the doctrine of sin and its consequences, the doctrine of the Person of Christ and of His vicarious atonement, the doctrine of the resurrection), and *secondary* fundamental doctrines, or such as are not directly, immediately, and essentially necessary to salvation, of which a person under circumstances may be ignorant, although they also serve as a foundation of faith (*e. g.*, the doctrine of the Sacraments, of the corruption of

^{*} We should keep in mind that Scripture does not stress the distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals.

man as a result of the Fall, of the communion of natures in Christ).

Non-fundamental doctrines, in the system of Lutheran dogmatics, are such as are neither directly nor indirectly connected with the fact of salvation through Christ, with the fact of the forgiveness of sins through the atoning power of His blood. Of these doctrines it may be said, in an even greater degree than in the case of the secondary fundamental doctrines, that one may be *ignorant of them* without jeopardizing his relation to God by such ignorance alone. Yet ignorance and weakness with regard to any doctrine or statement dare never lead to the denial of so much as one word, phrase, or sentence of the Holy Scriptures. The situation may well be put as follows: "The proclamation of one error consistently leads to the proclamation of others and in the end to the denial of the entire Scriptural truth. Against this fatal consequence of denying God's Word and indulging in error Luther earnestly warns all Christian theologians when he writes: 'You must not say, I purpose to err as a Christian. *Christian* erring occurs only from ignorance.' (St. Louis Ed., XIX:1132.) Luther admits that there is such an anomaly as 'Christian erring'; that is to say, even a true Christian errs due to weakness or ignorance. But this 'Christian erring' becomes 'unchristian erring' as soon as a person deliberately and knowingly yields to error. Such 'unchristian erring' must needs overturn the foundation of faith and endanger salvation." (Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, I:55.) As examples of non-fundamental doctrines Lutheran dogmaticians mention those concerning the sin and eternal ruin of certain angels, concerning the immortality of the first man before the Fall, concerning Antichrist. So far as any Scripture *doctrine* is concerned, that is, *any revealed truth presented directly or in the form of a conclusion which reproduces the divine communication in all its parts*

according to correct logical thinking (even if not in agreement with human reason), every true Christian must take this position: A persistent denial of any doctrine, fundamental or non-fundamental, primary or secondary, yea, of any statement of the Bible will militate against the doctrine of inspiration and thus undermine the very foundation of Christian belief. In other words: No person has the liberty to say: This teaching is indeed *found* in the Bible, or it is *based upon* clear statements of the Bible, but I still will not believe it; for by such attitude he would overthrow the authority of the Scripture, that is, the organic foundation. Or, as Baier puts it, in his original edition (p. 56): "At the same time, moreover, we are to be careful in this matter, lest by embracing or professing error we rashly sin against divine revelation and God Himself; especially, lest something be maintained, through the persuasion of others, contrary to conscience, whereby the foundation and the truth of one or more of the fundamental articles of the faith are overturned. For thus, as by a mortal sin, faith and the Holy Spirit may be and are entirely driven away." We may well illustrate this point, as Luther occasionally does, by comparing the Christian *corpus doctrinae* to a chain which the breaking of even one link will render useless, or by thinking of a living body, or organism, into one of whose smallest members poison is introduced, since this may prove disastrous to the entire bodily structure. The comparison is very apt also in this respect that the human body may keep on living if only the trunk, the head, the heart, and other essential organs are functioning, yet the full life of the body is affected by the illness or absence of even a minor member or organ, to use St. Paul's language: "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). And the same Apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, is deeply concerned about their purity in doctrine in every respect:

"I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds also should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2, 3). "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9).

There are a few additional definitions which may serve to shed some light on the discussion which follows, which must be kept in mind for a proper understanding of the arguments which are being used in the Church. A *dogma*, in the usage of the Church, means a distinctive doctrine as formulated in the confessions of a church body, which such church body has officially set forth and promulgated as her own. A dogma may be erroneous (*e. g.*, the Roman Catholic dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary or that of the infallibility of the Pope), this being the case if the men who formulate it do not present the actual teaching of the Word of God. Under no circumstances may a body of true Christian believers acknowledge as right and thus legitimize any dogma, or church doctrine, which is not set forth in Scripture. Dogmas, creeds, and confessions have a rightful place in the Christian Church only in the measure in which they teach the doctrines of God and not the doctrines of men (Matt. 15:9).

For the sake of completeness we must add also some definitions of terms whose wrong understanding has caused not a little confusion in the Church. We have, for example, the difficulty of the so-called *theological problems*, questions, frequently of an historical and exegetical nature, within the sphere of theology in the wider sense which have not as yet been satisfactorily solved, for whose solution Scripture offers either no material at all or at least not in sufficient amounts to meet the needs of our finite human minds. Such questions concern, for example, the correct

meaning of the word *Selah* in the psalms, the exact nature of the "urim and thummim" of the high priest in Old Testament days, the question whether the world will be destroyed on Judgment Day only as to form or also as to substance, whether creationism or traducianism is more acceptable, and the like. Some of these difficulties may be cleared up by further study and will then cease to be theological problems. This applies especially to prophecy.

Open questions cause much more trouble, chiefly because of the different explanations given to the term. Open questions, as used here are such problems as may arise in connection with some part of Christian doctrine, but add the factor of human construction to the truth of Scripture. Such open questions are, for example, that concerning the number of angels, the exact time of their creation and of the time of their fall. Hence the term "open questions" is not to be applied to *doctrines*, whether fundamental or non-fundamental, much less to what has been termed "non-divisive doctrinal differences." If there is a teaching, a doctrinal statement in the Bible, then all Christians are to accept and believe such teaching. Here we have no liberty to believe or to disbelieve, or to grant a false freedom to others, for all doctrines, as taught in Holy Writ, require all Christians to believe without condition or reservation.

And still another term requires at least some explanation and discussion, namely, the designation *exegetical question or problem*. Properly understood, the term should be used only of linguistic difficulties, whether these be connected with a true *hapax legomenon* in the original or whether it concerns a statement which is not in itself clear to the student of Scripture because of the author's peculiar way of expressing a thought for which no true parallel can be aduced. In the truest sense of the word, exegetical problems are to be identified with acknowledged *cruces interpretum*,

whose meaning is actually so obscure that we must acknowledge our inability to understand the meaning of the phrase concerned, especially if we are dealing with figurative language or Oriental imagery. Sometimes exegetical difficulties are occasioned by errors made by copyists, and even the best efforts of textual criticism will not succeed in removing all obstacles. A case of this kind is found in 1 Tim. 3:16, where it is difficult to decide whether the text had *OC* or *ΘC*, of the word *θεός*. In this case the linguistic difficulty does not obscure the meaning, but in other instances it presents just this obstacle. In John 5:39 the form of the verb may be imperative, and it may be indicative, and the commentators do not agree as to which form is to be preferred. In other passages difficulties of another kind cause trouble. In connection with the word *πρώτη* in Luke 2:2 the question is asked: Was this census the first one ever undertaken by the Roman government, or was it the first one while Quirinius was military legate for the first time? In 2 Sam. 6:23, compared with 2 Sam. 21:8, the Michal-Merab difficulty may be one of the text only, but it causes trouble in the exegesis of the passages. Another well-known *crux* is that of Gal. 3:20, for which scores of explanations have been offered. So long as the explanations given by commentators do not militate against other clear passages of the Bible, a diversity of opinions is permissible, but if the explanation of an obscure passage, as in Rev. 20, leads to a statement of doctrine which is contrary to unmistakable declarations of non-figurative passages, we must reject the procedure.

But for all these exegetical problems, as Luther remarks, Scripture is not to be regarded as a waxen nose, to be turned and twisted at the will of commentators. His suggestion is one whose common sense cannot be questioned, namely, that anyone having difficulty with dark and obscure pas-

sages should remain with those that are clear and unmistakable in their meaning. It is contrary to sound Scriptural exposition to base any doctrine upon an obscure passage alone.

And this consideration leads us to the next point of our discussion. When it was stated above that a doctrine may in many instances be given in the form of a definition reproducing the teaching of the Bible on some point according to the laws of correct logical thinking, this was said with particular reference to sound rules of Biblical hermeneutics. Some of the most important rules with which we are here concerned may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. The foundation of all Lutheran hermeneutics is, and must ever remain, the fact of the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. This includes the inviolability of Holy Writ.

2. The Lutheran exegete must always be conscious of the fundamental principles of Scriptural interpretation as found in the standard books on the subject, many of whose Latin maxims have become proverbial, such as:

Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur (Scripture is its own interpreter).

Sensus literalis unus est (The meaning of a word in one passage is only one).

Distinguendum est inter sensum literalem et sensum literae (We must distinguish between the literal sense and the meaning of the word).

Unitas et perspicuitas Sacrae Scripturae ad fundamenta pertinent (The unity and the perspicuity of Holy Scripture belong to the fundamentals of faith).

Parallelismus realis est argumentativus (The real parallelism may be used for purposes of argument).

Exegeticus spectat usum loquendi, contextum, analogiam fidei (The exegete must mark the use of a word or phrase in speech, the context, the analogy of faith).

(This has reference in particular to the meaning of words, especially according to their etymology and the vocabulary of the author, the sentence structure and the style, the immediate context, the wider context, the parallels, the historical background.)

3. The obvious and apparent sense of a passage should always receive first consideration.

4. Modifications of this rule are in order only when the context clearly requires a different understanding.

5. Every clear statement of Scripture, whether contained in a single sentence or verse (even an incidental phrase, as in John 10:35), or in a unit paragraph, is in itself sufficient to fix a Scriptural doctrine.

6. Every statement of Scripture not clear to us on account of the inadequacy of our understanding or our lack of linguistic information, but rendered clear by parallel passages, may be quoted in proof of a doctrine.

7. The term "analogy of faith" does not refer to any man-made system or unit, but simply declares that Scripture alone establishes articles of faith through its clear passages.

8. No interpretation of any passage may contradict any clear statement of the Bible, especially where divergent readings and our insufficient knowledge of the original languages contribute to the obscurity.

9. When prophecies are fulfilled completely in past and present history, the same prophecies cannot be construed to have a future fulfillment by which the earlier is denied.

II

This somewhat extensive first section of the point under discussion is the result of the insistence which the Word of God itself demands with regard to the inviolability of Holy Writ. For it is evident that a careful consideration of the several points thus far offered will show the serious nature of all aberrations in doctrine. Just as no teacher of the Church may choose the parts of the Bible which he is willing to accept as inspired, while he ignores the rest of the inspired record as contrary to his subjective opinion, so no theologian may set aside any doctrine of the Bible, fundamental or non-fundamental, important or unimportant in his estimation, and not come under the condemnation of the Word of God itself.

This attitude and approach to Holy Writ is required, in the first place, by the definite demand made throughout the Bible that its writings, its statements and teachings of every kind, must be accepted simply because "whatsoever things were aforetime written, were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). We have our Lord's own positive, unequivocal command, couched in the well-known hypothetical statement: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31 f.). We have the same background in the Great Commission: "Teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever* I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). St. Paul puts it just as unequivocally: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of . . . the Holy Scriptures . . . all Scripture" (2 Tim. 3:14-16). And speaking of his own ministry, the Apostle Paul was able truthfully to state: "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). While St. Paul was fully aware of the fact that the heart of his Gospel proclamation lay in the fact which he so beautifully expresses in the words: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2), he nevertheless did not make a subjective choice of the truths of Scripture, but set forth before the congregations served by him every fact which came to him by the Lord's command and inspiration as well as all the truths which he found recorded in the Old Testament. He was fully aware of the fact that the ordinances of the Ceremonial Law had been abrogated by Christ, but he insisted nevertheless that the statements of the Old Testament were God's inspired truth and must be accepted from this angle, even though their content was no longer in force.

But even as the approach to the Bible and its doctrines is thus set forth in Scriptures from the positive angle, so

the Lord, throughout Holy Writ, warns against adding to the Word or diminishing any part of the truth which He desired to have the believers know. We find His earnest warning in the Pentateuch, when He says: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deut. 4:2), and we find it in the book which has been placed at the end of the Sacred Volume: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life" (Rev. 22:18 f.). For any person to add to the inspired record or to take away therefrom, to make any subjective changes in the Word which God gave by His holy Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, is the worst form of *laesa majestas*. The "trembling at the Word of God" (Is. 66:2) is a form of behavior which must be most assiduously cultivated by every Christian teacher, yea, by every believer.

One of the most significant passages which belong to our discussion at this point is found in I Cor. 3:11-15: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." The passage is, at least in part, figurative, and its interpretation offers some difficulties; nevertheless the chief points are clear. The Apostle is evidently speaking of people, of teachers, within the Church, of laborers together with God, whom he warns, saying: "Let everyone take heed how he buildeth there-

upon." The reference is undoubtedly to the foundation doctrine of Christ and His atonement, as in Eph. 2:19-21. Now, God indeed wants the superstructure on this foundation to be the very best, to agree with the precious nature of the foundation; but if some teacher inadvertently, or because of insufficient knowledge, builds only hay, wood, stubble on this foundation, so that the superstructure is not so perfect as God wants it to be, while yet the foundation stands unchanged, then God has a way of dealing with such teachers, namely, by trying them out and by testing their teaching in the fire of controversy or affliction. If their superstructure will not stand up under such a test, this will be revealed in the process, but their own personal salvation will not be endangered so long as they still hold to the foundation. In the case of many such teachers we are dealing with a fortunate inconsistency between the childlike faith of their hearts in the full truth of the Word and the bungling of a reason which tries to find human explanations for divine truths. It is expected, of course, that a teacher whose teaching structure will obviously not stand the test on account of its flimsiness will thereafter build with more substantial material. This is the exposition also of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, which, after quoting 1 Cor. 3:11, adds: "Although among these (in the body which is built upon the true foundation, *i. e.*, upon Christ and faith) there are also many weak persons, *who build upon the foundation stubble which will perish, i. e.*, certain unprofitable opinions (some human thoughts and opinions), which, nevertheless, because they do not overthrow the foundation, are both forgiven them and also corrected. And the writings of the holy Fathers testify that sometimes even they built stubble upon the foundation, but that did not overthrow their faith." (*Concordia Triglotta*, 233.) Then the Apology goes on to say that whereas inadvertent mistakes that do not

affect the foundation may be tolerated for a time, the errors which overthrow faith, as the condemnation of the article concerning the remission of sins, must be made an issue at once, since it concerns the very heart of Christianity.

The teaching of this passage is supported also by 2 Tim. 2:19 ff.: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." The Apostle had just referred to the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander, whose doctrinal aberration apparently concerned the fundamental teaching of the resurrection. (1 Tim. 1:19 f. Cp. with 2 Tim. 2:17 f.) Their false teaching had resulted in overthrowing the faith of some, as the Apostle complains. In spite of that bad situation, however, the Church of God remains safe. The true believers are in the hand of God, who knows them (John 10:28). And every real Christian will not be given to a false security, since his confession of the name of Christ as his Savior carries with it the obligation to depart from every kind of iniquity, both in life and in doctrine. It is true that in the great house of the Church there are vessels, appointments, pieces of equipment of various kinds. Some hold a high rank as to talents and worth, while others are of minor value, and still others tend to dishonor. With regard to this last group the Apostle's admonition is to cleanse oneself from these: *Purgando sese, exierit de numero horum* (Bengel). In the measure in which such dishonorable things (persons) are removed, the believers, individually and collectively, will come closer to the ideal which

God has set up, as vessels unto honor, sanctified, ready for the great Master's use. The *Pulpit Commentary* summarizes the thought in the sentence: "He [the believer] must purge himself from heresy and impurity." And the Lange Schaff *Commentary* has a long exposition of the verses here considered, from which the following sentences are pertinent: "*To name* the name of the Lord means *to confess* this name as that of Christ, the Lord. . . . 'Αδixία includes also here the doctrine of the false teachers, in so far as this of itself leads to ἀσέβεια . . . Paul is not discoursing of outside matters, but of the family of God itself. . . . The first-named vessels are to honor, the last to dishonor; not of the house or of the proprietor, but only in respect of themselves, in so far as they subserve an honorable or an ignominious use. . . . *From these* can only refer to those persons in the congregation whom the Apostle, in the preceding verse, has described under the figurative expression 'vessels of wood and earth.' The breaking away of all fellowship with these was the first requisite, if one would reach the high ideal of Christian life set forth in the words that follow." It is clear, then, that the Apostle recognizes the possibility, yea, the probability of digressions, aberrations from the truth in the outward body of the Church, but he does not sanction them, he does not approve of them; he wants the members of the Church themselves to strive for the highest possible degree of perfection, and this includes, if all other efforts fail, the purging, the casting out of such vessels unto dishonor. As one leading Lutheran dogmatician puts it: "That the Church has never reached a perfect, but only a fundamental unity of doctrine and confession, is a fact which is true, but at the same time one which should deeply grieve the Christians and cause them to be ashamed, for this defect has its reason nowhere else but in the flesh of the Christians. Yet the fact of the defect cannot involve its right

to exist, and from the deplorable fact that the Church has ever reached only a fundamental unity of faith we are not to draw the conclusion and principle that she is not to go beyond this condition. We shall indeed bear with those who err from weakness; but their error is not to demand recognition as a justified point of view, as an open question, but it is to be regarded only as a position which offends against Scripture and which will annul church fellowship, not indeed at once, but certainly at such a time when the error, after a thorough refutation from Scripture and after its inability to submit any points for its justification has become manifest, still insists upon maintaining itself." (Hoenecke, *Ev.-Luth. Dogmatik*, I:457.) And Krauth (*Conservative Reformation*, 195), as quoted in a previous chapter, puts it very bluntly: "Somewhere on earth, if the gates of hell have not prevailed against the Church, there is a Communion whose fellowship involves no departure from a solitary article of Christian faith — and no man should be willing to be united with any other Communion. The man who is sure there is no such Communion is bound to put forth the effort to originate it. He who knows of no Creed which is true to the Rule of Faith, in all its articles, should at once prepare one that is. Every Christian is bound either to find a Church on Earth, pure in its whole faith [confession], or to make one." Surely no one would here want to raise the accusation of Donatism, for this ideal is in full agreement with the Word of God, which insists, time and again, that there must be no digressions from the truth of Scripture, no aberrations from the doctrine revealed in Holy Writ which may eventually claim authority and the right to exist in the Church.

Time and again the Bible cautions against errors which may foul the limpidity of the stream flowing in the Word of Grace. The context frequently implies that such errors

may be digressions in both doctrine and life, and that they may happen without intention, probably out of lack of information on some of the subjects concerned. If such errors are concerned with the foundation of faith, if they overthrow clear statements of Holy Writ, they must be taken care of at once by proper correction. Thus the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, of the atonement through the blood of Christ, of the resurrection on the Last Day, and of similar fundamental doctrines cannot be tolerated, no, not for an hour, as St. Paul puts it Gal. 2:5. If it should ever happen that a teacher of the Church makes mistakes in this field, he must be induced to make public correction of his errors and then avoid a repetition of the offense. In Ps. 119:110 we read: "The wicked have laid a snare for me; yet I erred not from Thy precepts." The Psalmist was constantly on the alert lest he fall into errors which would lead him away from the truth which he had once embraced. A similar thought is offered in Is. 35:8, for the statement is made that one will be safe only in the measure in which he adheres closely to the ways and words of God and is not guilty of any aberrations. James 5:19, which speaks of erring from the truth, is frequently explained as referring to moral transgressions only, but the context seems to indicate that digressions or aberrations from the truth in general are meant, a situation which includes errors in teaching. We conclude, therefore, that God is very insistent upon having all believers, and specifically all teachers of the Church, adhere strictly to the full truth of the Word. While He refers to inadvertent mistakes and is ready to tolerate for a time such as do not subvert the foundation of Christian teaching, He by no means condones such departures from the full and comprehensive understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Luther rightly says: "The Holy Ghost (who speaks in all words of Scripture) does not permit Himself to be parted or divided,

that He should permit one point to be taught or believed as true, and the other as false." (St. Louis Ed., XX:1781.)

Just how serious the matter of erring from the truth is apt to become we see from a series of passages which describe such deviations from the full truth of God's Word and point to the spiritual devastation which is likely to follow. The Lord Jesus says: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:18 f. See also Jer. 23:28-32). This thought will be taken up once more when we discuss the climax to which doctrinal aberrations may lead, namely to an anti-Christian position in doctrine.

III

What conclusions are we bound to draw, then, from our discussion up to this point? Chiefly these: While open questions and theological problems, as explained above, are not divisive of church fellowship, *not clearly proposed as an actual doctrine of Scripture set forth for purposes of faith*, and while exegetical questions are to be placed under the same heading, the situation is different when it comes to doctrines clearly revealed in Scripture, the truths plainly set forth in Scripture or drawn from its divine declarations. Non-fundamental doctrines, properly so called, are indeed in themselves not immediately and absolutely divisive of church fellowship, provided that any error in teaching them is held temporarily only, from weakness and in ignorance, without stubbornness, and with no attempt at making them the authoritative *publica doctrina*. A false position in non-fundamentals is divisive of church fellowship if it is per-

sistently held in opposition to Scripture truth and is tantamount to a demand for toleration of error. If an individual (especially a pastor or professor as teacher of the Church), or a congregation, or an entire church body, takes a false stand on a non-fundamental doctrine, making it a part of its *publica doctrina*, or open confession, this error may not be tolerated in silence, for it is tantamount to a rejection of a teaching of Scripture (and of the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, if this is the general church body concerned). If two or more church bodies are trying to establish the fact of an existing unity of the spirit, any false position on any doctrine, fundamental or non-fundamental, must *first* be adjusted in accordance with the Word of God; otherwise any declaration of agreement will not be based on the Word of God as the one infallible guide, but on convenience and expediency.

One of the chief difficulties with which we must contend at the present time is that which would put certain non-fundamental *doctrines* into the category of open questions or exegetical problems and then tenaciously adhere to the false position, error thus demanding recognition on the same level with divine truth. It is not permissible to relegate certain non-fundamental matters to the domain of open questions simply because a few otherwise orthodox teachers taught incorrectly concerning them. This false attitude seems to be the only reason why some teachers of the Church clung to the *intuitu fidei* explanation in the doctrine of the election of grace and why others, in the same *locus*, insist on answering the question *Cur non omnes?*² by postulating a psychological problem along the lines of self-decision in a synergistic sense. Luther, as a humble learner, was willing enough to change his earlier, erroneous teaching concerning a supposed general conversion of the Jews as a nation or group. (St. Louis Ed., XX:2030 f.; V:66 f.)

Gerhard was in error in his teaching concerning Sunday, as was Selnecker in his notion of a particular resurrection, also the *Hirschberger Bibel* showed a weakness in its interpretation of the Antichrist. So likewise other Lutheran teachers have erred concerning certain eschatological questions, concerning the taking of interest in business, concerning some phase of the so-called "apostolic succession," concerning the scope of the Christian ministry, concerning certain problems connected with the separation of Church and State, etc. The question that confronts us in such cases relates to the attitude which must be taken by us in dealing with such mistakes. As we shall see, very much depends upon the nature of the individual case, the degree of aberration, the manner in which the erroneous position is defended, and other factors. Quite frequently such notions are privately held and come under the heading of theological "Schrullen" (fads and fancies). These have no right to exist, of course, but, as our Confessions state, our forbearance must be guided by love, so long as no propaganda is made for the error. One thing must be clear to every one concerned, namely this: Where the Word of God has spoken in a manner to eliminate false conclusions, teachers of the Church dare not deviate from the truth in even the slightest degree. "The Scripture cannot be broken."

IV

But this consideration leads us to an examination of divisions in the Church, what has been called the "offense of denominationalism, schism, sectarianism, etc." It is necessary to speak very carefully here, for we are dealing with phenomena which are covered only in part by Scriptural nomenclature. The term "denominationalism" in particular is understood by many as denoting merely different phases, different points of emphasis in the teaching of certain lead-

ers of groups in the Church, so that the latter is itself regarded as the precious stone, and the various denominations as the facets which set off the beauty of the stone. But the situation is not quite as simple as that, and the Bible gives us some specific cues for building up our concepts accordingly.

We learn much from the use of the word *αἵρεσις* in the New Testament. It is applied to both the Sadducees (Acts 5:17) and to the Pharisees (Acts 15:5; 26:5). Although the members of both parties were regarded as members of the Jewish Church, the peculiar tenets of each group marked them as a sect, as an organization holding particular doctrines. Both groups were closed organizations, and membership involved certain obligations. There was a cleavage between them and the ordinary Jews, just as the Ebionites clearly occupied a separate existence. In a general way, there is a parallel between this situation and that obtaining in Christendom today, with its division into various denominations.

The matter was slightly different when the followers of Christ took a position apart from the other Jews and especially when Gentiles were received into the membership of the Christian congregations. The three decades following the resurrection and ascension of the Savior present, among other interesting phenomena, that of a testing process which culminated in the open breach between Christianity and Judaism. At the beginning of this period of testing, the word of the Apostle Paul, written as late as 58 A. D., was still the principle in mission work: "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." During this entire time the Christians were looked upon as a Jewish sect, a group probably regarded like the Ebionites, characterized by certain peculiar views, but not fundamentally different from the members of the ancient Jewish Church. The Christians are called the sect of the

Nazarenes (Acts 24:5), and the Jews of Rome (after the Claudian persecution, approximately 61 A. D.) tell Paul that this sect was everywhere spoken against (Acts 28:22). Even the Roman government seems to have looked upon the Christians as a Jewish sect and therefore coming under the designation of a *religio licita*, as the behavior of Gallio in Corinth indicates (Acts 18:12-17).

The use of the word *αἵρεσις* in the last two passages already points to the fact that there is a God-pleasing separation and separatism, a "denominationalism" which meets with the full approval of God. It is the separation which is required on the part of those who desire to adhere fully and completely to the clear and unmistakable command of God that the confessors of the truth must withdraw from all those who deliberately cling to error in any part of Christian doctrine, in any teaching of Holy Scripture. This fact must be emphasized time and again, for it is at the very heart of the difficulty about which we are concerned in this study. God wants all those who actually possess the unity of the spirit to hold and to give evidence of such unity (Eph. 4:3). On the other hand, He commands that those who hold the full truth separate themselves from those who promulgate and perpetuate errors in doctrine and a life which is contrary to Scripture truth. The verbs used by the sacred writers are unmistakable: Avoid them (Rom. 16:17); withdraw yourselves (2 Thess. 3:6); avoid (1 Tim. 6:20); shun (2 Tim. 2:16); turn away (2 Tim. 3:5); be thou ware (2 Tim. 4:15); avoid, reject (Titus 3:9-11; 2 John 10 f.; 1 John 4:1, 6). That the same prohibitions apply to syncretism, with an even sharper emphasis, is a matter of common knowledge (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

That such separation from all those who in any manner promulgated falsehood was the will of God appears also from the behavior of the Apostles, particularly of Paul.

Following the principle which had been dominant in the ministry of Jesus and in that of the Apostles up to the time of His ascension, Paul made it a point to contact the Jews first wherever an opportunity offered. However, in Pisidian Antioch, where Paul had spoken in the synagogue of the Jews, he was obliged to declare, after his sermon had been rejected by the Jews, that he would henceforth turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). The same was true in Corinth, where Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath. But when they opposed themselves, Paul's declaration was: "From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6 f.). The same situation developed in Ephesus, so that Paul was again obliged to depart from those with whom he had formerly been associated and to separate the disciples (Acts 19:8 f.). In each case Paul had been ready to establish fellowship with the people of his race, on the basis of the Word of God, and in each case he was compelled by their unwillingness to accept the truth to withdraw himself. That was a separation commanded by God, required by Paul's adherence to the full truth. It resulted in the Christians' being regarded as a *αἵρεσις*, but this could be prevented as little as the fact that the Christians were given this name in Antioch, in a spirit of mockery. It appears at once, however, that it is really not those who adhere faithfully to the truth who are at fault when divisions occur in the Church, but those who reject the truth as a whole or in part.

The Scripture speaks also of this situation, putting the full blame on those who do not continue in the Word. Among the works of the flesh listed by St. Paul in Gal. 5:20 we find also seditions and heresies. St. Peter speaks of certain false teachers in the midst of the Christian congregations who would bring in damnable heresies (2 Pet. 2:1). St. Paul speaks of a man who is an heretic and who is to be earnestly admonished and finally rejected (Titus 3, 10). The

word *σχίσμα* is used by the Apostle in other connections to signify a falling away from the truth and forming of groups inimical to the full truth. He tells the Corinthians that they should all speak the same thing, and that there should be no divisions among them (1 Cor. 1:10). The same situation is presented in John 6:66, where we are told that many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. And St. John simply and effectively describes the origin and development of schisms in the Church when he writes: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).

There is a reason for Paul's earnest and insistent warning against separatism, against schism. Doctrinal aberrations very frequently arise in a very subtle manner. For example, it is possible incipient false denominationalism which St. Paul describes in Phil. 1:15-18, when he speaks of teachers who are active in the Church with a false motivation, preaching Christ of contention, not sincerely.* It is remarkable that he rejoices over the fact that even under such conditions Christ is still being preached. Yet even so we rejoice that Christ is still preached in many Christian churches whose confessional basis is inadequate. But the situation, even under the most favorable circumstances, is quite precarious. It is this fact that causes the Apostle to issue the earnest warning: "That there should be no schism in the body," namely, that of the Church (1 Cor. 12:25), the same point that is brought out in 1 Cor. 11:18 f., for he refers to schisms which may lead to the formation of sects and thus disrupt the body of Christ. It may all be true enough that men do

* The history of the Church demonstrates in more than one instance that a situation of this kind led to a false separation.

not start out with this intention of subverting the truth of the Gospel. Aberrations from the truth which finally result in denial and opposition to the Word develop by a process whose insidious nature is hidden from the eyes of the very men who are guilty of forsaking the truth. Both Scripture and history teach that men who leave the truth, even in an apparently insignificant point, as a matter of fact may reach the stage when they, possibly for personal reasons or on account of contentiousness, oppose first the persons of the faithful messengers of the Gospel and subsequently go off on a tangent also with regard to one or more points of doctrine, the unintentional and inadvertent deviation thus becoming a conscious and deliberate opposition to certain parts of the truth. The development which often leads to such false denominationalism (or sectarianism) is well described by the Apostle Paul in his address to the elders of Ephesus when he states: "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). According to this statement the significant points in an incipient sectarian setup are the fact that the teachers who are in error and speak perverse things are men arising in the midst of the Christian congregation or church body and that the men who thus become guilty of opposition and error in the matter of doctrine draw away disciples after them, so that they, with their following, then form a sect. This seems to have been the case with the disciples of John (John 3:25 ff.), who apparently reappear in history as men with certain strange and inadequate views concerning Baptism (Acts 19:1 ff.), so that they had to be given special instruction before they could be received as members of the orthodox congregation at Ephesus.

The next step in the development of schisms is described in a number of passages, for Scripture indicates that men who have left the orthodox communion of the Church rarely

remain neutral, but usually turn into enemies of the truth. St. Peter describes them in the well-known words: "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Pet. 2:1). That, in a nutshell, is the phenomenon of a pernicious separatism, for these particular teachers arose in the midst of the orthodox Church, presenting doctrines contrary to the revealed truth of God, and they would have a following, as the Apostle proceeds to state: "Many shall follow their pernicious ways." It is the Hymenaeus-Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20) and the Hymenaeus-Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17) situation all over again. Cp. again 1 John 2:19. In one case, at least, we have the name of such a schismatic group, evidently a sect in the midst of Christendom, against whom the Lord warns (Rev. 2:6, 15). The course downward is clearly the following: doctrinal aberrations, refusal to accept correction, stubborn opposition to instruction from Scripture, open enmity against the truth, with the attempt to neutralize and vitiate its effects.

The Lord wants the true believers, specifically the true teachers of the Church, to take cognizance of this state of affairs. It is precisely at this point that Rom. 16:17 f. must find its application, for there the direction is given: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid them*." This verse has ever been a thorn in the flesh to all those who would minimize their digression from the full truth of God's Word. But "the words stand there too mightily," as Luther stated with regard to another clear statement of the Bible. The declaration is too general to have it apply to the Judaizers only, and the Apostle is obviously referring to teaching any doctrine which is at variance with the full *corpus doctrinae* which he had transmitted by oral and written communication. And the sweeping statement is supported by the

use of the word *τοιοῦτοι*, "such," that is, people of this type, of this kind, and not *οὗτοι*, "these," which might refer to the Judaizers only. "Errorists of this type," Paul would say, "people who do not hesitate to set aside the clear teaching of the Bible on any point, are the very people who frequently become guilty of denying Christ and serving their carnal appetites, of letting selfish interests govern their actions." The history of the Church abounds in instances where just such consequences followed a departure from the truth once delivered to the saints.* [A passage which

* For a detailed exegetical discussion of this text, see *Concordia Theological Monthly*, IV:413-424. The following extract is also pertinent at this point:

"There remains the question of the use or application of our text in present-day church life. The duty of looking out for, and avoiding errorists is certainly one which, like all doctrines and all rules and principles of Christian conduct laid down in Scripture, will retain its validity until the end of days. There seems to be no good reason why v. 17 should not be used for this purpose. St. Paul found it necessary to warn the Roman congregation against certain heretical teachers of known carnal propensities and vicious character. That, however, is no proof that the Apostle would not have issued a similar warning in the case of well-meaning and pious, but mistaken teachers who, after due admonition, refused to see the error of their way or could not see the error of their way. In other words, the command contained in v. 17 can and must stand irrespective of whether or not the characterization of v. 18 applies; and of this we may be assured all the more because all Scripture is replete with commands to adhere to the Truth given by God through Prophets and Apostles and His Son Jesus Christ, and to shun and reject all teaching that goes beyond or contradicts the teaching given by inspiration of God. With regard to v. 18, one who holds the view propounded in this paper will naturally find it impossible, whether in writing or in speech or in thought, to apply the harsh terms of St. Paul to all who teach error or hold to error in some form or other, as long as these errorists must still be accounted Christians because of their profession and their conduct. It is quite different in the case of sectaries, schismatics, heretics, who arrogantly flout the authority of the Word of God; who ruthlessly break into Christian congregations on sheepstealing expeditions; who usurp positions of authority and use these positions to feed their ambitious pride and to swell their bank accounts at the expense of their

presents certain parallel thoughts is Phil. 3:18 f.: "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now I tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." This statement, like that previously cited, has often been attacked as being too condemnatory, especially when it is applied to the better group of denominations within Christendom. But two thoughts are to be kept in mind always, with regard to deviations from the truth of Scripture: first, that the conscious denial of even one comparatively unimportant and even relatively insignificant statement of the Bible is an insult to the wisdom of God; and secondly, that the doctrines of the Bible are so closely inter-related that the denial of any one of them may also be reflected in the errorist's attitude toward the remainder of the revealed truth.] The unity of Scripture demands the acceptance of all its parts, without equivocation and without human interpretations. Luther writes: "My dear sir, God's Word is God's Word, which will not permit men to find fault with it. He who makes God a liar and blasphemes Him in one word or says that it is a small thing for Him to be

deceived victims. Such people are certainly not servants of the Lord Jesus Christ; they are certainly "serving their belly"; in most cases there is present in their activity also that deliberate deception which St. Paul had observed in those false teachers against whom he warned the Christians at Rome. See 2 Cor. 11:19, 20; Gal. 6:12, 13.

"If the wider application of v. 17 be granted, the injunction, 'Avoid them' must be held to forbid religious fellowship, church fellowship, fraternal relationship with the heterodox, including those whose claim to be Christian bodies or communities is granted without debate. Into questions that belong to the field of casuistics (*e. g.*, when there is legitimate doubt whether an action constitutes the setting up of religious fellowship) we do not propose to enter now. The essence of this warning, as of many similar warnings, is that we are not to accept false teaching, nor to become sharers in other men's sin by an acquiescence in, or a toleration of, false teaching. Whatever else may be included in this 'Avoid them' (ἐκκλίνετε ἀπ' αὐτόν), must be subject to considerations of time and place and circumstances and personality." (H. Hamann, in *Australasian Review*, Vol. XII, No. 4: 113 f.)

blasphemed and called a liar, he blasphemes the whole God and has little regard for all blasphemy of God. He is a God who will not permit Himself to be divided or to be praised in one place and scolded in another, to be honored in one place and be despised in another." (St. Louis Ed., XX:775.)

For that reason Scripture so emphatically demands that the Christians in full possession of the truth separate themselves from those who deviate from the truth, persist in their errors, and perpetuate false doctrines. In 2 Thess. 3:6 the Apostle, having referred to the Word of the Lord and his teaching as basic in the life of the Church, gives the direct command: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received from us." We have here the case of one who had been regarded as a brother, but now chose to walk contrary to the rule and order of God by rejecting the tradition, the teaching as it had been transmitted by the Apostle and his associates. To limit the text to moral transgressions does not do justice to its import. A similar thought is conveyed in 1 Tim. 1:18 f.: "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." Timothy had been instructed and trained in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament and thereby been given faith and a good conscience. But certain people whom the Apostle has in mind had made shipwreck in both their faith, in deviating from the truth of the Word, and their conscience, since they refused to have it guided by the infallible norm of this Word. Thus the condition of opposition to the truth, of heresy, of schism, and of refusing to heed the divine instructions was created. In 1 Tim. 6:3-5 the Apostle sum-

marizes his warnings along this line: "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing . . . from such withdraw thyself." So the refusal to receive the wholesome teaching of the Lord and the moral perversions which followed such refusal are thrown together by the Apostle, and his definite command to Timothy under the circumstances is that he must testify in such cases by withdrawing from those who are guilty of the offense against the Word of God. For by such refusal to accept the truth of Scriptures does sectarianism, in this way do heresies develop. The first step, as stated above, is deviation from the truth of the inspired account, possibly inadvertently; the second is insistence upon teaching which is contrary to that of the Apostles; the third is open denial of the truth and deliberate continuing in errors once embraced, so that these false doctrines or heretical teachings are perpetuated from one generation of teachers and hearers to the next.

And so Holy Scriptures picture also the climax of opposition against the revealed truth of the inspired account, in describing men who, in their opposition to the Word of God, reach the stage of anti-Christianism. The warning of our Savior is well known: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). It is interesting to find, here and elsewhere, that such false teachers will insist upon hiding their true character. This is brought out by St. Paul, who, after referring to Satan as transforming himself into an angel of light, in order to deceive men, continues: "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14). Of the latter days of the world the Lord Jesus says, in particular: "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall

show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:23 f.). Machinations of men of this type are described at length by the Apostle Paul in 2 Tim. 2:16-18 and elsewhere. And St. John writes: "Little children, it is the last time: and ye have heard that Antichrist shall come; even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us" (1 John 2:18 f. Cp. 2 John 7b). It is in full agreement with Scriptural usage when we refer to such teachers as false prophets, false apostles, false teachers, and antichrists (Matt. 24:11; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10, in addition to the passages adduced above). It is a word of the most impressive warning that the Apostle gives us when he writes: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

CHAPTER VII

Unionism

*Mark them which cause divisions and offenses . . .
and avoid them. ROM. 16:17*

THE term church fellowship in this treatise is used as equivalent to Christian fellowship, fraternal relations, recognition or acknowledgment of others as brethren in the faith. The terms are synonymous.

Christian fellowship, as we have seen, is a Scriptural expression. It stands for that relation among Christians which is based upon their common fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:3): "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Hence it is also called the "fellowship of the spirit" (Phil. 2:1), "fellowship in the Gospel" (Phil. 1:5). It is a fellowship which we enter by the Gospel through the call (1 Cor. 1:9). In a sense customary also in our usage the term occurs Gal. 2:9, where Paul designates the fellowship of faith and of joint labors between himself and the other Apostles the "right hand of fellowship." Practically

every reference to fellowship is related to the doctrine of the Apostles, which is specifically mentioned Acts 2:42.

When we traced this relation called Christian fellowship to its source, we found in it the doctrine of the unity of the Christian Church, the Church Invisible. The Church is originally a "fellowship of faith and of the Holy Ghost in hearts" (Apology, VII and VIII:5, 12-15). This essential fellowship is the body of Christ, comprises only believers, and all believers, of all times and places. The most common term applied to those who are members of it is "children of God," in this sense "brethren" (Matt. 12:47-49). It should be said that in common usage we restrict the term brethren to those whom we have recognized and acknowledged as united in the same faith and doctrine.

The fellowship relation is involved in the fraternal exchange of pulpits, the transfer of members, in communion at the altar, in all acts and relationships which involve the existence of a common bond of faith. That which unites is the confession of the faith which we hold, and the purpose of any union of Christian effort is the promulgation of that faith. We labor and worship with those with whom we are in Christian fellowship.

The manifestations of fellowship are joint worship and joint work. In order to simplify our discussion, we are limiting it to the relation of church bodies or of congregations, leaving out of consideration for the present the relationship of individuals. When one congregation worships with another or fixes the arrangement that its members may worship in another; when they engage in joint missionary and educational work; when they acknowledge each other's candidates of theology and members released with certificate: we have the legitimate manifestations of fellowship, distinguished from its doctrinal basis in definition, though such basis is indispensable for maintaining this fraternal relationship.

While church fellowship presumes unity in the faith, it is not identical with it. There may be agreement in doctrine and therefore every condition of fellowship (in the sense that they with us are children of God, in the spiritual sense are brethren), yet the active fellowship relation may be absent. There have always been Lutherans who hold the orthodox doctrine but are outwardly members in an unorthodox body. Of these we say that they are *in statu confessionis*. This term applies so long as there is continued testimony on the part of such against the error of the unorthodox body. It is a doctrine of our Church that also in heretical bodies we recognize the divinity of the call. However, these cases are exceptional and must be temporary relationships, and to treat such a *status confessionis* as equivalent to church fellowship, making it the basis of joint worship and work, would set aside the principle that fellowship is a mutual acknowledgment of union with the true visible Church. In other words, though we find an individual pastor or an entire congregation professing the truth and ordering all its affairs according to the Word of God, save this one point that they are in fellowship with a heterodox body, we would not be justified in establishing ecclesiastical fellowship relations with such a pastor or congregation.

Fellowship relations with those who deny any *doctrine of Scripture** we call *unionism*. It is to be noted that this negative term is not, like "fellowship," a Scriptural expression. Hence while we cannot admit of any difference in the definition of fellowship and while we are opposed to the establishment of any fellowship which is not based on unity in the faith, the expression "unionism" and its exact definition are fixed not by Scripture, but by usage of language in the Church.

* For the exact meaning of this term see pp. 67, 114, 118, 132, and elsewhere.

The term was first applied to the efforts made in the 17th century toward a reunion of the Lutheran and Reformed branches of Protestantism. "It may be said in general that the greater willingness and readiness for a union was always on the part of the Reformed; the Lutherans never took the initiative, and when they were approached, they distrusted their opponents, and their polemics was characterized by much severity. The historian has no difficulty in explaining this phenomenon. In the first place, the Lutherans and the Reformed respectively regarded their disagreements from a different point of view. The Reformed were inclined to regard the differences as more or less theological. Zwingli in 1529 offered Luther the hand of fellowship notwithstanding their disagreement. The Lutherans refused so to distinguish between religion and theology when the question of union and confessional recognition was under discussion. The suggestion to desist from controversy and to recognize each other notwithstanding the existing differences they rejected as syncretism and infidelity to truth." (J. L. Neve, *The Lutherans in the Movements for Church Union*, 1921, p. 50 f.) At Thorn in 1645 the attempt was made by the King of Poland to unite not only Lutherans and Reformed, but with these also the Roman Catholics of his domain. This was impossible, because the Romanists simply wished to lead the Protestants back to the fold from which they had strayed. They were simply to see their errors and then to come back repenting. According to an order that had been given by the king, a disputation on the differences was not permitted. The three parties were simply to state their differences once or twice; argumentation was to be excluded. Neither profit nor progress could be secured in such a way. So the king had to dismiss the convention. Nothing had been accomplished. "The Thorn convention is an illustration of what can be expected of a union movement when polit-

ical interests are the all-overshadowing motive and when truth is not honestly sought," is the comment of Dr. Neve.

The Prussian Union of 1817 is a typical example. It was proclaimed by King Frederick William III as "a renewed Evangelical Christian Church." The confessional basis of this Church was to be "the principal points in Christianity, wherein both Churches agree" (consensus); the doctrines of disagreement (dissensus), on the other hand, were to be considered as "non-essential" and were to be left to the private conviction and liberty of the individual; in other words, they were to be eliminated from the Church as such. Essentially, then, it was a union on the basis of a distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals. Oppressive measures were applied, and to make resistance to the union program impossible, a number of laws were made: (1) against private religious meetings; (2) against the performing of ministerial acts by persons not ordained; (3) against parents refusing to send their children to the religious instruction of the state schools; (4) against ministers not using the king's Agenda. A great deal of controversy followed and finally led to a Union of a more confederative character. During the century that followed, union catechisms were in use in certain areas outside of Prussia (Anhalt, Hesse, Nassau, Waldeck, Hanau, Baden, the Palatinate on the Rhine). The eastern provinces are largely Lutheran and use the Lutheran Catechism, while the Rhine provinces are overwhelmingly Reformed, and here the Heidelberg Catechism or a catechism confessionally identical with the Heidelberg is in use. However, there is pulpit fellowship everywhere in the state churches of Germany, there is practically no confessional division in the theological faculties, and, except for the various Free Churches, there is no denominational distinction recognizable in the theological literature of Germany.

An offshoot of the State Church of Germany is the German Evangelical Synod of North America, based on the same policy of agreement in essentials, liberty in non-essentials. The body has more recently been united with the Reformed Church of America. The body has now largely surrendered to Modernism.

In Canada the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists have united in the United Church of Canada, all three constituent denominations having given up their distinctive doctrines. We subscribe to the opinion of the *Lutheran Voice*, a Canadian paper of the American Lutheran Church: "With us it is not only an established custom, we are fully agreed and firmly believe that a union of churches can be accomplished only on the basis of a oneness in faith and confession and that a union such as was brought about in the formation of the United Church of Canada is crass unionism and pernicious indifferentism, since the principles on which it rests are utilitarian. There can be no union without unity. Besides, indifference to the doctrine of God's Holy Word and its profession in its truth and purity must be fatal, bears within itself the seeds of disagreement and dissolution."

In the United States the Federal Council of Churches is the outstanding example of unionistic collaboration on the part of bodies widely differing in doctrine. While Unitarians and Universalists are not officially represented, they do associate themselves with the local church federations, and this not in externals only, but in evangelistic efforts. The *Lutheran* asked (May 8, 1924): "How can evangelicals unite in evangelistic work with Unitarians and Universalists, who deny that Gospel? Uniting with them in evangelistic effort gives them the right to preach at such meetings. How can they preach what evangelicals believe? None would dream of barring them from listening to the Gospel, but in

a union effort evangelicals would have no right to bar them from preaching. They are thus placed on a par with evangelicals and have a right to participate. In a union meeting it would be scant courtesy to say to them: 'We will permit you to listen to our Gospel, but you are not privileged to preach yours.' Moreover, when evangelicals thus join with rationalists in holding union meetings, the public is bound to draw the inference that there is no vital difference between them. Is it right, is it serving the cause of evangelical Christianity, to let the public so infer?"

This question touches the heart of our definition of unionism — joint work and worship by which the truth is either denied or the appearance of denial or at least of indifferentism is given.

The Federal Council of Churches has spawned an immense number of unionistic federations and organizational efforts. There is the Interdenominational Council of Men's Work, in which twenty-two denominations take part and which announces the program: "To evaluate and vitalize religious movements among men; to promote among men interdenominational fellowship and co-operation; to lead men to know the meaning of Christ in their lives." The Christian Unity League under the leadership of St. Peter Ainslie has been another effort in the direction of uniting all denominations under one head. He sponsored the adoption in 1928 of the following program: "We believe that if the prayer of our Lord is to be fulfilled, the unity of all His disciples must be visibly expressed. Only as the disciples of the Lord are united and share with one another the spiritual insight and experience which each can contribute can they fully explore the mind of Christ and understand His will. Only a united church can evangelize the world. Only as the church exemplifies the spirit of brotherhood can she effectively promote that spirit throughout

the range of human relationships." The verbiage of this resolution is typical of the unionistic program as advanced by Dr. Ainslie, by Dr. John R. Mott, Dr. E. Stanley Jones, and other leaders in the movement. The *Christian Union Quarterly*, edited by Dr. Ainslie, is the official organ.

With the decline of confessionalism, itself the result of the higher criticism of the Bible and of modernistic teaching in the theological seminaries, there has been a growth of the Community Church idea. Representatives of various bodies which find the going too hard locally unite into a Community Church, forming a religious melting pot. There are said to be two thousand of these churches in the United States, and not all of them are of the liberal type. Many community churches in the smaller towns and independent little chapels in the big cities are composed of Fundamentalists who have left the Presbyterian, Methodist, Christian, Baptist, and Congregationalist bodies because their home church had fallen a victim to Modernism.

The entire Fundamentalist movement in the United States is unionistic. The indifferent attitude towards the principle of confessionalism is indicated by the very name. They stress fundamentals and permit differences of belief on all other points of Christian doctrine. There is available even a standard constitution of a Fundamentalist church. The affirmation which is taken when joining such a congregation embraces the following points:

"1. That the Holy Scriptures consisting of the Old and the New Testaments are God's holy Word supernaturally inspired and constitute for all men and the Church an only and infallible rule and guide in matters of doctrine, faith, and practice.

"2. That there is but one God, everlasting, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, and that in unity of this Godhead there are three

persons of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

"3. The Personality, Sovereignty, and Providence of God the Father.

"4. The pre-existent Deity of Jesus Christ, whose name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; that he is before all things, and by him all things consist, and in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily: his Virgin Birth; that he was very God and very man, made of a woman, made under the law: his sacrificial, substitutionary Atonement through his death for the sins of the whole world: his Bodily Resurrection from the dead: his ascension into heaven: and his second coming.

"5. The Personality, Deity, and work of the Holy Spirit.

"6. That God created man in his own image, male and female, by direct, complete, creative act, not through or by a process, man from the first being of his own type or kind, full, complete, and perfect in form and nature, a separate and distinct creation, underived from any other.

"7. The doctrine of the race's fall in Adam and redemption in Christ.

"8. The universal necessity of regeneration.

"9. The doctrines of Justification by faith, a conscious salvation, and a Holy Life.

"10. The doctrines — of the resurrection of the body: and that all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad, with life eternal for believers and everlasting punishment for unbelievers who have had opportunity to hear the Gospel, God dealing justly according to his infinite wisdom, mercy,

and love with those who have never had opportunity to hear the message of his Word."

As a statement of those fundamental teachings of Christianity which are necessary to salvation no Bible Christian will find fault with this creed. But there is a significant omission of any statement regarding holy Baptism and the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. On a platform such as this Luther could have united with the Zwinglians, and the Formula of Concord was an unnecessary exercise of theological acumen.

E. Stanley Jones, on the Modernist side, proposes the organization of "The Church of Christ in America." He says: "We would all drop our denominational names as separate Churches and belong to the one Church — 'The Church of Christ in America.' But under this central unity we would have branches — 'The Baptist Branch of the Church of Christ in America,' the 'Episcopalian Branch,' 'The Friends' Branch.' In these branches we would have local self-government in much the same way that we give States' rights in the United States. If a branch has bishops, they could keep them and look on them as they like, but they wouldn't force them on the rest as the price of unity. In the same way, if any branch held to adult baptism, they could continue to do so, but they would not compel the rest to adhere to it. Each branch could make any conditions or no conditions for transfer into membership or ministry they may desire to make. Nine tenths of the denominations would probably straight off make no conditions whatever either for transfer or ministry or membership. Moreover, nine tenths of them would have intercommunion straight off. The other one tenth would put themselves into a stream of influences that in the end would make for the dropping of all barriers. In the meantime we would be patient, leaving to time and the Spirit of God the righting of exclusiveness."

The *Lutheran Herald* (March 16, 1937) commented: "To relegate unity in faith to a marginal matter of secondary importance is flying in the face of historical experience. If the matter of an externally united Church is the salvation of the Church in the present crisis, then why not be absorbed by the Catholic Church, which is already institutionalized and has the working machinery with years of experience in exerting mass and political pressure to attain its ends? The present movement for church union rests on fundamentally wrong conceptions of what the church is, by what methods, and by what power it is built and promoted."

A favorite and supposedly unanswerable argument urged by protagonists of church union is that it is our Lord's own express will that there should be only one visible Church. The proof of this is said to be the prayer He uttered shortly before He was betrayed: "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). The unity which Christ prayed for was clearly not external. It was a spiritual unity, a unity of the faith. And that His prayer is not still waiting to be answered is evident from the fact that such a unity was manifest among His disciples in those far-off days and still binds together with indissoluble bonds in the invisible Church all true believers irrespective of the earthly organization, sect, denomination, or "church" to which they belong. *The Old Paths*, published on Ceylon, said in 1931: "Union can only be brought about by compromise. Compromise means the surrender of dearly bought convictions. The surrender will be in regard to doctrine as well as to church government. In both considerable territory will be yielded before union takes place. Unitarians and Christian Scientists, Seventh Day Adventists and Russellites, Presbyterians and Methodists, Jews, Moslems, and Zoroastrians may expect to sit cheek by jowl in 'religious fellowship.' Ultimately it will be a sort of ecclesiastical Noah's Ark, providing stable room for

all manner of clean and unclean beliefs. This vast machine of apostasy will at last be destroyed when Christ comes again to take His true Church to be with Him."

The writer last quoted is not guilty of exaggeration. Modernists like Joseph Fort Newton have proposed a Fellowship of Faiths, which has actually had a meeting or two based upon the emphasizing of the "peace and brotherhood as taught by Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Mohammedanism."

The kind of unionistic creed which would embody the religious beliefs held in common by Protestants, Catholics, and Jews has been issued by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. The text was published in the *Federal Council Bulletin* of March, 1942, and reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned individuals of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths, viewing the present catastrophic results of godlessness in the world and facing the fact that our country is at war, realize the necessity for stressing those spiritual truths which we hold in common. We therefore affirm the following fundamental religious beliefs. We believe these convictions are important to every religious person and are the spiritual foundation of our national life.

"As Catholics, Jews, and Protestants, we assert again our abiding loyalty to our respective religious convictions. We recognize differences in many important beliefs. The following statement is therefore not a profession of faith to be considered sufficient or complete by any of us, but an expression of certain basic convictions which we share.

"We believe in one God, Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Though we have varying views as to the nature and content of God's more direct revelation, we hold that He also manifests His being, power, wisdom, and love through His works and especially in the mind, will, and personality of man.

"We believe that the mind of man reflects, though imperfectly, the mind of God, and we reject, as a betrayal of human dignity, all attempts to explain man in merely material terms.

"We believe that God's all-holy will is the ultimate sanction of human morality and that man's true freedom and happiness depend on his obedience to the will of God as known to him. We reject all deterministic interpretations of man and all reduction of his moral duties to mere custom or social adjustment.

"We believe that recognition of man's dependence upon God is essential to the progress of true civilization; that nations, as well as individuals, are bound to acknowledge this; and that education or social theories which would state man's duties, standards, and happiness without reference to God are doomed to failure.

"We believe that God's fatherly providence extends equally to every human being. We reject theories of race which affirm the essential superiority of one racial strain over another. We acknowledge every man as our brother. We respect and champion his inalienable rights and are determined to do all in our power to promote man's temporal and spiritual welfare as necessary consequences of our duty to God.

"We believe the republican form of government to be the most desirable for our nation and for countries of similarly democratic traditions. Any political forms, however, can bring liberty and happiness to a society only when moral and religious principles are accepted and practiced.

"We believe, with the founders of this republic, that individual rights are an endowment from God, and we reject, as certain to result in the enslavement of man, all denials of this principle."

Aside from its fearful mixing of social and political planning with religious profession, this statement treats as unessential for spiritual fellowship every specific doctrine of the New Testament. Among the Protestants signing it are such well-known Modernists as Luther A. Weigle, Daniel A. Poling, Samuel M. Cavert, George A. Buttrick, Henry Sloane Coffin, and Ernest Fremont Tittle.

This is the way the creed will read when adopted by a local union church:

"We believe in God, the Father of Men, in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Savior and Brother, and in the high destinies of the whole family of men.

"We believe it to be the mission of the church to proclaim the gospel of all mankind, to exalt the worship of God and to labor for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood.

"We are united in striving to know the will of God, as revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, and in the lives of noble men and women of every age, and in our purpose to work in His ways, made known or to be made known to us.

"Depending, as did our fathers, upon the guidance of the Spirit of God, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into a place fit for the dwelling of God and man; and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting." (Declaration of Faith of Community Church in Chesterfield, Ill.)

Such statements come as a response to the demand issued by the Fifteenth International Sunday School Convention in Buffalo, N. Y., in 1918, which declared among other things: "For such a re-definition of discipleship as shall emphasize deeds and not creeds as constituting the heart-message of Jesus to our day."

Syncretistic church work, being essentially a rejection of

the Bible as divinely inspired authority in matters of faith, must lead to religious disintegration. The effect of the Prussian union on the church life of Germany has been disastrous. The state churches of the Scandinavian countries have these many years united conservatives and liberals in one organization, and the results have been in line with the statement by Krauth quoted in an earlier chapter of our book. There is not much of conservatism left either in Norway or Sweden. The Rev. Olaf Turmo has said in the *Lutheran Herald*: "Some years ago, during the controversy in Norway between the positive and the liberal theologians, Prof. Lyder Bruun, himself a pronounced liberal, made and to my mind successfully defended the statement that the difference between the two was a difference in degree only and not in kind. For even the conservative theologians in Norway had to a very great extent given up the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Not only the liberals, but also many of the leaders among the conservatives, held that not everything in the Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, he said, there is no essential difference between us. The difference is one in degree only, and not in kind. We discard more than you do, but when you have once conceded the principle that not everything the Bible says and teaches is the inspired and infallible Word of God, you have no right to say that what you hold to be such is inspired truth in opposition to our rejection of it. For if some parts or teachings in the Bible are inspired and some are not, then who shall be the judges? We have as much right as you to choose and to discard. For both parties build on the same principle, that in reality it is we who must decide what in the Bible is inspired and what is not."

In Canada, union was forced upon the denominations, and the Rev. H. Warren Allen, who has spent six years in Canada and is familiar with the workings of the United

Church in Canada, claims that this union is a colossal failure. According to the *Minneapolis Journal* he is quoted as having made the following statement:

"Seven years have passed, and Canada has not yet recovered from the tragic conflict that ensued. Homes were broken, lifelong friendships were severed, people were left without pastors, churches were burned and padlocked, law-suits were instituted by the score. Today instead of union, theirs is disunion, a torn and bleeding body of Christ, wounded in the house of friends, who tried by ecclesiastical and civil law to force organic union upon an unwilling people. There are more church buildings in Canada than at any time in history. It will take the United Church of Canada 50 years to live down the stain upon her record in the methods she used in coming into existence."

Much grief has come to the denominations from the co-operative enterprises in foreign mission fields, as in the division of territory, combined management of educational institutions and hospitals. Not long ago the *Watchman-Examiner*, speaking for the Baptists, had this to say (May 2, 1935): "As a direct result of this liberalizing work in the Philippines and elsewhere we have doubt and hesitancy on the part of large numbers of churches and individuals in the denomination, cutting the nerve of enthusiasm, reducing the giving of our Baptist people from year to year, cutting down our missionary force and activity, preventing extension into new fields, and causing interminable controversy among our Baptist hosts throughout the country. Another direct result is the disintegration of our Baptist forces and churches, creating a separatist body known as the Association of Regular Baptists. It is an undisputed fact that many of our strong churches as well as many more of the smaller churches have already withdrawn from our Northern Baptist Convention, and hundreds of others will doubtless fol-

low unless something is done to correct this shallow, liberalizing, unionizing work within the denomination."

We conclude this chapter with two expressions from Lutheran sources. Dr. T. E. Schmauk, President of the General Council, said in *The Lutheran*, No. 8, 1917: "The Lutheran faith has suffered terribly in the past by attempts of union and co-operation with various Christian denominations and tendencies. Usually they have penetrated insidiously into our spirit, and poisoned our own life-roots, and taken possession of our palaces. But these damages have been wrought through an attempted unity with men who are not at one with us in the profession of a common faith. As Luther said: They have a different spirit."

"The differences of Christians," the same writer says elsewhere, "despite the self-determined right of individual Christians, are not pleasing to God. God wants every man to have his own honest conviction. Yet as a matter of fact the sum of convictions do not agree, and they introduce schism. Just how to bring harmony of conviction on the one truth is the problem of the ages.

"External union of Christians will not bring about that harmony. It will simply transfer the points of divisiveness to a place within the common circle. These points may, then, indeed, through closer association be resolved into unity. This unity will be the unity of the most persistent wearing down of those who are more retiring and yielding. The Lutheran Church has suffered tremendously from such unities with other Protestants, particularly the more assertive and strident kind. Or, if they are exceeding keen and fundamental in the minds of those who hold them, they will lead to internal disunity and to final rupture. Hence *the safe way of unifying Christianity is to gain internal union of principle which can then properly be expressed in an external union of organization.*

*"The real union of Christians is a joining of the same mind in the same faith, and a fellowship in the life and work of the church."**

And in the article already quoted Rev. Turmo of the Norwegian Lutheran Church has a summary of the dangers which threaten God's true Church on earth through unionism. He gives these reasons:

"In the first place, because comparatively few recognize it as a danger. It is an undermining of the walls of Zion from within and therefore among the most insidious of all the dangers with which it is threatened. And furthermore, because it rests on a principle which in its very nature threatens to deprive the Church of the truth of God's Word, upon which the Church is built as on its divine foundation. It is founded, whether those who practice it realize it or not, on indifferentism, that is, indifference as to whether what is believed or taught is in full harmony with Holy Scripture or not. And this indifference, again, is a fruit of doubt as to the clearness and the sufficiency of Scripture in all matters of saving faith. It is virtually a denial of what we have learned in our catechism, that 'in all things which are necessary to know in order to be saved the Bible is plain enough to those who use it aright.' 'If the perspicuity of the Bible and that certainly of faith which is built on God's clear Word are once brought into doubt, so that on account thereof it is considered a matter of small importance to be in full agreement in matters of faith, then it will not be long before one after another of the fundamental truths of Christianity are held in contempt and denied, and our people will for a time fill the churches of the Unitarians and the Universalists until they at last end in infidelism' (V. Koren).

"It sounds so reasonable and so modest and unassuming

* Quoted by Sandt, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

to say: 'How can we be so certain that it is we who have the truth and that all those who do not agree with us in doctrine are mistaken; yes, that they teach false doctrine and thereby sin against God? And even if we are convinced that they are mistaken in certain matters of doctrine, are we not uncharitable in not being willing to fraternize with them when it is apparent to us that they are sincere in their convictions and that if they sin in teaching otherwise than the Word of God teaches, their sin is one of weakness? Should we not, then, rather co-operate with them both in worship and in other religious activities for our mutual edification and the extension of the kingdom of God?'

"It is in such co-operation Unionism consists, in fellowship, in worship, and religious work with those who are not in agreement with us in doctrine and in faith.

"That which must decide this question for us, if we want to be faithful to God's Word, is not what seems to us to be reasonable, but: What does Scripture say? How does God Himself in Holy Scripture decide this question for us? Whatever is in accordance with God's Word also harmonizes with true charity, first of all with that love for God which demands unconditional obedience to His Word and also that love for our neighbor which fulfills the duty of showing him his sin in order thereby to gain him for God and for ourselves and promote his true welfare, and, if he cannot be gained, then to prevent as far as lies in us that others be led astray."

CHAPTER VIII

The Universal Priesthood of Believers

Kings and priests unto God and His Father.

REV. 1:6

THESE is one topic pertaining to the discussion of the fellowship problem which, for the sake of completeness, requires special treatment, and that is the universal priesthood of believers. This was emphasized by Luther from a number of angles, not only because of the intrinsic blessings connected with it, but also on account of the external advantages which the believers derive from it as well as the privileges associated with it. The universal priesthood of the believers has a direct connection with the question of unity and fellowship and a profound bearing upon the solution of many problems that are associated with Christian fellowship.

The fact of the universal priesthood of the believers is stated in a number of powerful passages. The most comprehensive of these passages is 1 Pet. 2:9: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of

darkness into His marvelous light." The words of Saint Peter echo and reproduce the call and commission given by the Lord to His Church in the Old Testament (Ex. 19:5 f.), especially in the significant phrase "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." In Rev. 1:6 and 5:10 the expression "royal priesthood" is analyzed or dissolved in the double designation "kings and priests," so that a twofold function of the New Testament believers is predicated. For it is believers only who are here included, for only to these the Holy Ghost transmits this honor and authority, that of being priests unto God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of the blessings associated with this status of the believers are mentioned by Saint Peter in applying the Exodus passage to New Testament conditions. As the royal priesthood of the New Covenant they are also a "chosen generation," a group elected and set apart by God as a "holy nation," a people consecrated to Him and His service, and "a peculiar people," that is, a group of people closely knitted together by spiritual bonds as the property purchased and won, or gained, by the Lord, so that they together should be His own. This thought is brought out in verse five of the same chapter, where the Apostle writes: "Ye also, as lively [that is, living] stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood." The temple of the Church is still in the process of being built; men are constantly being added to the group which the Lord has made His own.

This building up of the *una sancta*, the communion of saints, is done through the choosing of God in Christ. This action on the part of the Lord of the Church implies and includes the fruition of all the Gospel promises, all the gifts and blessings which, by virtue of the vicarious suffering and death of Christ, are gained for all mankind. They are ap-

propriated, as a matter of fact, by all believers, by all those who, through the Gospel, are drawn to Christ by the Father, as Jesus repeatedly states, *e. g.*, John 6:44; cp. 14:6. These blessings are again and again named in the Gospel message. They are, primarily, the remission of their sins (Luke 1:77; Acts 10:43; 26:18; Eph. 1:7); peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Is. 53:5; Rom. 5:1; 1 Pet. 5:14); access to the Father by faith, in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12); membership in the body of Christ and fellowship with all those who are likewise incorporated into Him (1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:4 f.; Eph. 5:30). As members of the body of Christ all believers are in the most intimate fellowship with Christ, who, in turn, is in essential fellowship with His Father (John 17:21, 23). In their spiritual priesthood the believers of the New Covenant are nearer to God than the priests of the Old Testament, and every believer possesses and enjoys this privilege, so that he can apply all the blessings of the Gospel to himself personally, with no need of meditation and intervention on the part of any order of priests ordained by men. For the blessings enumerated above are, properly speaking, the distinctive feature and basis of the spiritual priesthood.

But what are the functions of the spiritual priesthood? They are mentioned by Saint Peter in the double passage already referred to, 1 Pet. 2:5, 9: "To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ . . . that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Both passages speak of the functions of the spiritual priesthood, the second one of the sacramental element, the first one of the sacrificial element in their ministry. In either case all Christians, as spiritual priests, are in communion with God or act as the representatives of God.

Let us take the sacramental functions of the spiritual priesthood first, which comprise, in effect, the Office of the Keys, the duty of making the Gospel known throughout the world. This duty, which is summarized in the Great Commission, makes it incumbent upon every believer to show forth the praises of Him who called him out of darkness into His marvelous light, to go and make disciples of all men by the administration of the means of grace, to establish the fellowship which actually exists in the communion of saints and between all its members, that all those who are brought to faith may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ (Acts 26:18). The other side of the sacramental functions is given in Matt. 18 and John 20.

The sacrificial functions of the spiritual priesthood are those by virtue of which every Christian for himself as well as in company with those who have obtained the like precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1) presents the sacrifices of his heart, lips, and body to God as a reasonable service (Rom. 12:1). This is the activity for which the believers have received an unction from the Holy One (1 John 2:20). The sacrifice of the lips and of praise, in particular, is a function of the spiritual priesthood, as the Scripture indicates. (Jer. 3:11; Heb. 13:15). In this respect there is a constant co-operative function on the part of all true believers, because "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

What conclusions are we bound to draw with reference to the general topic under discussion, that of Christian fellowship, and specifically of prayer fellowship? Generally speaking, our conclusions must be the following: Where the situation in which we find ourselves is in agreement with

the conditions laid down in the Word of God, prayer fellowship is a necessary concomitant of the spiritual priesthood, an expression of a spiritual unity actually existing, an exercise of the relationship which really obtains, without a shred of dissimulation or hypocrisy. The universal fellowship of all Christians (in the *una sancta*) implies prayer fellowship in the sense that all true believers are praying to the one Triune God in the name of their one Savior and that such prayers are acceptable to God and heard. This is a fellowship in the sight of God, purely spiritual, and one of which the praying Christians may themselves often be unaware. In this connection we remember that prayer means the communication of the believer with God, an act of worship (in the form of supplication, petition, intercession, and giving of thanks, 1 Tim. 2:1), both devotional and confessional in character (Luke 2:37; Ps. 27:6; 100:4; Jer. 29:7; James 5:15). Under the conditions of the *una sancta* all true believers pray for and with one another.

Let us now apply these principles to actual life situations. We begin with a definition of joint prayer. Common or joint prayer, under the conditions of visible church membership is the prayer of two or more people holding the Christian profession, such prayer being an act of *common* devotion and worship on the basis of their common doctrinal tenets. Such prayer is partly commanded, partly presupposed in Scripture: Ps. 26:12 ("*in the congregations* will I bless the Lord"); Ps. 34:3 ("Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us *exalt His name together*"); Ps. 35:18 ("I will give Thee thanks *in the great congregation*"); Ps. 42:4 ("I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone *with the multitude*"); Ps. 55:14 ("We took sweet counsel *together* and walked unto the house of God in company"); Col. 3:16 ("Let the Word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom . . . in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"); Eph. 5:17 f. ("Speaking to

yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"); Acts 16:25 ("And at midnight *Paul and Silas prayed*").

This section might well be expanded to the proportion of a chapter if we should take cognizance of every situation in which joint prayer was actually practiced: Dan. 2:18 ("that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish"); Acts 4:24 ("they lifted up their voice to God *with one accord*"); Acts 4:31 ("When they had *prayed*, the place was shaken where they were *assembled together*"); Acts 12:12 ("many were gathered together praying"); Acts 13:3 ("And when they had fasted and *prayed*"); Acts 20:36 ("And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and *prayed with them all*").

It is evident, even from the passages already adduced, that prayer fellowship is incumbent upon Christians, also in the visible membership of corporate bodies, on the basis of Scriptural command and precept, when all conditions of the existence of an actual spiritual unity are satisfied, namely a *common* supplication or petition to God, in *common* worship, on the basis of a *common* purpose. The Lord says: "If two of you shall *agree* on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:19). The Lord then states that this agreement must be *in His name*, which includes a full and unequivocal acceptance of His Word. Cp. John 16:23-26. The admonition of the Apostle in Rom. 15:6 is: "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God," and in 1 Tim. 2:1 ff.: "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men. . . . I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands." We must here refer also to Acts 1:14 ("*with one accord in prayer and supplication*");

Acts 2:42 ("And they continued in . . . *fellowship, and in prayers*").

If these conditions, however, are not present, that is, if there is no unity of the spirit, common or joint prayer degenerates into promiscuous prayer, as certain passages of Scripture clearly show. If it is true even of an individual that an ostensible prayer, that is, one offered with a show of true devotion, while yet a person has iniquitous intentions of any kind in his heart, will not be heard (Ps. 66:18), how much more will that be true of an entire group! The Lord's scathing denunciations of such a situation in Is. 1:11-15 as well as in Amos 5:21-23 are well known. But Scripture just as clearly states that a prayer offered under any circumstances, *while a person refuses to accept* the instructions, admonitions, and warnings of the Word of God in any manner whatsoever, will be vitiated and neutralized by such an attitude. The simple statement made by the formerly blind man well presents the teaching of the Lord on this subject: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God and doeth His will, him He heareth" (John 9:31). That this observation was based upon clear statements of the Old Testament is seen from Prov. 1:23-28, where Wisdom calls out: "Turn you at My reproof; behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded. . . . Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me." The same warning is issued in Zech. 7:11-13: "But they refused to hearken and pulled away the shoulder and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts an adamant stone, lest they should hear the Law and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in His

Spirit by the former Prophets. . . . Therefore it came to pass, that as He cried, and they would not hear, so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." Cp. also Is. 1:15; Prov. 28:9; Jer. 8:8-11. If any person *refuses to accept* so much as one statement of Scripture, he is guilty of disobedience to the majesty of God and makes his prayer a mockery, and all those who, under such conditions, join him in prayer, will become guilty of his sins by partaking of his attitude. This point will be developed more fully in another connection.

CHAPTER IX

Pulpit and Altar Fellowship

*I thank my God . . . for your fellowship
in the Gospel.* PHIL. 1:3, 5

THE burden of proof rests upon him who wishes in any way to restrict or limit my exercise of those privileges which I have as a child of God. This proposition is valid in every conceivable relation of the Christian. We are here concerned with those activities which relate him to other Christians and to the community. These are: testifying to the doctrines of the faith, Holy Communion, worship — the chief privileges of the Universal Priesthood.

Let it be said at once that there are occasions on which my preaching of the Gospel, my partaking of the Lord's Supper with other believers, my worshiping and praying with them, would be contrary to Scripture. But the burden of proof rests on me who has made this statement. The reason for this is so plain that it can be stated without theological verbiage. When the Bible speaks of preaching, teaching, testifying to the Gospel, it does not in any passage that treats of this matter indicate, either by precept or ex-

ample, that at certain times or in certain places the preaching of the Gospel is a sin. When the Bible speaks of Holy Communion, it does not in a single instance say that with certain adult fellow believers, professed members of the Holy Christian Church, who lead a godly life, I am not permitted to commune. When the Bible speaks of prayer, it does not suggest that a prayer, spoken in reliance on Christ's merit, may be a sin because of the time or the occasion at which it is spoken. We shall see shortly that there are indeed occasions when I cannot preach the truth of salvation, when I cannot commune with those who have accepted Christ as their Savior, nor pray with them. But since the Scriptures give us no instances of this kind or any specific commands of the negative order, the burden of proof rests on me or on whoever has made this statement. Preaching the Gospel is never wrong *per se*, communing with fellow Christians at the Lord's Table is never wrong *per se*, praying with other Christians is never wrong *per se*. What may in a given case make these things wrong is some *accidens*. If I establish a fellowship contrary to the will of God by my preaching in a given church, by communing at a given altar, by praying with a certain person or on a certain occasion, I sin against those words of God which forbid all complicity with error.

Pulpit Fellowship

The great commission of the Lord to His Church was: Preach the Gospel! Offhand, it must seem absurd that preaching the truth of salvation — that truth for the preaching of which the Christian Church has been founded — can be a sin. Anyone who would charge me with sin because I bear witness to the truth certainly has the *onus probandi*. To say that preaching under circumstances which must be called "unionistic" is a sin will not help us. As in all pro-

hibitions, we must be able to point to a word of God which forbids that which I forbid to my fellow Christian. Now, it is not a difficult matter to show that there are circumstances under which I cannot speak, preach, teach without giving at least the appearance of fellowship with errorists. When that is the case, I may not teach, testify, etc. In a certain town, all the churches join in a three-hour devotional service on Good Friday. The Seven Words of the cross are presented by pastors of the Friends, United Presbyterian, Methodist, Christian, Swedish Methodist, and Presbyterian Church. If this does not mean that the pastors of that town treat their confessional differences as non-essential, it means nothing. Yet Lutheran pastors have been known to participate with their congregations in such services. During the past few years it has become a common matter for Jews, Protestants, and Catholics to meet in various churches for services advertised as proof that in all that is really essential in religion the three agree. The following extract from a sermon preached at such an affair is typical: "The Fatherhood of God is the first great affirmation of religion which we believe, in which we all rejoice, and by which we are strengthened for our living. More and more as the years go on, this supreme fact of God, the Infinite Father, the Great Companion — 'closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet' — is being understood and lived by. It is the cornerstone of what is common in our experience and faith. The second affirmation follows from the first. It is that of the brotherhood of man. We believe that we are all created by God in His image, all sons of one Father, all brethren in the same family. This is the burden of the prayer of Israel, and it is the very heart of the religion of Jesus. How this solemn and glorious truth rebukes misunderstanding, prejudice, intolerance, and hatred among men and pleads for insight, patience, sympathy, and love!"

Professor G. B. Gohdes of the Theological Seminary at Columbus, Ohio, some years ago stated with admirable clearness the reason for limiting the Lutheran pulpit to Lutheran preachers thus:

"It is the firm conviction of the conservative element in the Lutheran Church that the truth for which the Lutheran Church stands is compromised when pulpit privileges are accorded to men of denominations *confessionally* at variance with the Lutheran Church. This is not an uncharitable view to take. The Calvinist, the Episcopalian, the Arminian, the Unitarian, and now the Modernist: each one of these, as he appeared on the stage of history, refused to accept the whole heritage of the Reformation; each one of these, by turns, took a stand against one precious truth or other. If the Lutheran pulpit can lawfully be accorded to one who repudiates the one or the other aspect of the truth to which the Lutheran Church is committed, the pledging of the Lutheran ministry to an established doctrinal standard tends to become a form without the substance of deep and unalterable conviction. The result of pulpit fellowship will be that of the Prussian Union in Germany: binding upon lip and heart and conscience will be only the matters of agreement, while the balance is treated as a matter of private choice. And even if the clergyman could be possessed of such intellectual plasticity as to hold that the sway of the truth remains uncircumscribed, although he welcome to his pulpit a man who rejects sundry planks of his platform, the common people will not have it so. The effect of pulpit fellowship upon them will be an impression, all too common even now, that doctrinal variance is not Truth modified by error, or a Christ obscured in some important aspect of his person and work, but merely divergent opinion without bearing upon redemptive fact and without significant import for mind, heart, and conscience.

"In view of these circumstances, what alone should be the attitude of all Lutherans toward the problem of pulpit fellowship? To solve it in the interest of the Lutheran Church of America; to take into consideration as primary factor the effect of one's personal attitude upon the hopes and fears of the common household of faith; to decide in favor of Lutheran union rather than of Lutheran division: *by restricting pulpit fellowship to the occupants of the platform to which Lutherans themselves are pledged — the Gospel, unabridged and undiluted, as found in the Confessions of the Church of the Reformation.*"*

There is unionism involved in pulpit fellowship if church bodies which are at variance in doctrine permit their pastors to occupy each others' pulpits or if pastors of such bodies take it upon themselves so to practice, without having removed the point or points of difference. If those who are present at such a service, or those who hear about it, are bound to assume, on the face of the matter, that the pastors who so practice identify themselves with the church body in whose pulpit they are preaching, the position taken by the Word of God is clear, for Scripture plainly prohibits compromise of the truth, indifference to doctrine, unionism, and giving of offense by such conduct.

On the other hand, where in fairness it cannot be said or maintained before the forum of common sense that such are the implications of my preaching or speaking, the Gospel has the priority — always and everywhere. The question is sometimes asked, How far may our ministers go in accepting invitations to preach to those not of our own immediate fellowship? In order to avail ourselves of such opportunities, what conditions must be fulfilled? The matter came up for discussion in the convention of the Central District of the

* G. B. Gohdes, *Calling Across the Fence*, 1926, p. 53 f.

Missouri Synod in 1870. An essay was presented on the subject "Pulpit Fellowship," and Thesis 12 read as follows: "On the other hand, it must not appear objectionable to a Lutheran minister to proclaim the Gospel in the pulpits of churches of another denomination so long as the conditions under which and the manner in which this is done are not objectionable." Now note the forthright way in which our fathers dealt with this question. The essay continues: "This is demanded by Mark 16:15: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' A Lutheran should accept every opportunity that offers itself to spread the true Gospel. This, however, does not mean that he is to force himself upon other congregations or sneak into them. He must respect the call of the other preachers, as Luther says in his interpretation of the 82d Psalm regarding this same matter: 'Unto each is assigned his portion of the people in which no one else or a stranger shall without his knowledge or permission teach the members, whether privately or publicly. . . . And this must be upheld that no matter how pious and upright a preacher may be, he has no right to preach to or secretly to instruct the people of a Roman or heretical parish without the pastor's knowledge and consent. It is not within his calling.'

"Three things should be noted by a Lutheran preacher under this thesis: 1. He must not give his own congregation reason for the suspicion that he agrees with preachers of other denominations in their doctrine. 2. He must have the strength and fortitude to confess the truth also in a strange pulpit. 3. He must possess the wisdom and courage at the proper time and after due instruction in the fundamental saving truths to point out the errors of the heterodox church.

"If it is asked, accordingly, whether it is contrary to the conscience of a Lutheran minister upon invitation to preach in a strange church, the answer is: No, Christ has preached

in the synagogs, the Apostles in the temples of idols, and we should be glad to preach in the Pope's palace if given permission. It would be a sin to reject offhand an offer that we preach the Gospel also to others."

Among those who took part in the deliberations (at Cleveland) in 1870 were H. C. Schwan, Dr. W. Sihler, F. Wymken, and Dr. C. F. W. Walther.

Lehre und Wehre, August, 1868 (page 253 f.), had this comment on the supreme need of bearing witness to the Gospel to those who are willing to hear our testimony:

"It need hardly be said that an orthodox teacher certainly may preach the Word of God in its clearness and truth also to the congregation of a heterodox teacher without sinning against the Word and will of God and without violating his office as a servant of the orthodox Church — if only he has been properly invited by those who have a right to do so.

"If Christ has a full right to rule also among His enemies, why shall not His servant render testimony in God's name for the truth, bearing witness with a free, courageous spirit, announcing the truth as it lives and moves in his heart, and do this without circumlocutions or cowardly reticence — so long as he does not speak uninvited into the flock of another and so long as he clearly sets forth his position as one definitely committed to the truth of God, an enemy of all false doctrine and unionism?

"There might be conditions under which he must even consider it a sacred duty so to take advantage of a rightful opportunity to make known the fullness of the Gospel to weak, misguided lambs of Christ, who in ignorance or by some act of divine Providence have become joined to a heretical organization. In other words, it may in such a case be his duty at least through the positive setting forth of the sound Gospel regarding some article of the faith to bring such people to the conviction that their attitude to-

ward the Scriptures is a false one. Such a one, actuated by the motives as described, will permit the clear voice of the heavenly Shepherd to be heard in a misguided flock, though he will by no means grant admission unto his own flock to the teachers of religious error."

The Rev. Julius Friedrich tells of his experience with Dr. Walther on an occasion such as the article in *Lehre und Wehre* had in mind. When a student, Rev. Friedrich, while on vacation at his home on a farm in Lake Co., Ill., was asked by a Congregationalist minister and his church council to conduct services in their church. Student Friedrich declined. On his return to St. Louis he made a report to Professor Walther and, to his surprise, was given a severe "calling down." Crestfallen, he said, "Then I should have preached the distinctive doctrines separating us from the Congregationalists?" Walther answered: "No; you should have preached the simple doctrine of salvation, for example, the doctrine of the means of grace."

The simple and saving doctrine has a right to be heard on any occasion and at any place to which its messengers are invited by those who have the right to extend an invitation. The direct reproof of error must follow in time, but only minds in which the good seed has been sown will be able to grasp our objections to the errors through which their Church has departed from the sound doctrine.

This reasoning applies also to the serving of non-Lutheran congregations by a Lutheran minister. Our Church has never disapproved of such arrangements. Instances might be quoted from the beginning of our work here in America when our pastors served congregations, vacant at the time, who desired their ministration. Nor can we make a time limit (say, of one year, two years, etc.) for such engagements. We do not know how soon the congregation will be convinced that their own doctrine is unscriptural.

Naturally, we do not celebrate Communion with such congregations. Otherwise, we conduct our service just as in the Lutheran Church with prayers, hymns, and all. In this way we recognize the presence of God's children in the congregation which we are serving in this manner. We have a right to believe that there are such true believers when the group asks us to serve them with our doctrine. Naturally, if we want to help these people, we must first of all permit them to get acquainted with the Lutheran teaching and to appreciate its beautiful harmony with the Scriptures. We are not going to stress first of all the Lutheran teaching regarding Baptism if we serve a Baptist congregation or predestination in a Presbyterian church. Let these things wait until they have a positive understanding of our doctrine. Let us take the position that these people love the Word of God and want to subject themselves to it. One should emphasize the doctrine of inspiration, the Bible as our only source of saving knowledge; then the doctrine of the atonement, conversion, justification, our inability to obey the Law and to be saved by works. If after this we begin to talk to them about their errors, it may be found that they are willing to listen to us. At any rate, it must be understood from the outset that we will teach according to the Word of God and that hearers are willing to submit to such teaching if based on clear Scripture.

The question was raised in the *Australian Lutheran* of Sept. 13, 1940: "Does it amount to a denial of faith if soldiers, in obedience to orders, attend church parades at which the service is conducted by a heterodox Church?" The Australian editor replied: "We do not unite in worship with those with whom we are not doctrinally in agreement. Yet there are occasions when we attend places of worship other than our own. Especially in military camps men often have little choice in the matter. But such attendance does

not necessarily indicate agreement. When Naaman, the Syrian, of whom we read in 2 Kings 5, was converted to worship the God of Israel, he knew that he must henceforth offer sacrifice to no other gods. Yet in his military capacity he would be obliged to accompany his king into the heathen temple and together with the king make obeisance to Rimmon. In this the Lord might pardon him, since he would be acting then merely as the valet of his sovereign. To this explanation Elisha replied, 'Go in peace.' Similarly, if those wearing the king's uniform are commanded to attend a church parade, this must not be taken as participation in the worship connected with such a parade. That, of course, is not to say that in the military camp the Christian soldier need not confess his faith. He will have ample opportunity for doing that."

Of the same nature is the participation of our ministers in baccalaureate services, patriotic services, addresses made on invitation of luncheon clubs (Rotarians, Kiwanians, Lions' Club, Optimists, and others), or on those rare occasions when a Reformed church or even a Jewish synagog or temple requests us to make a statement of what the Lutheran Church stands for. Cases of casuistry there may be, when a minister will be perplexed and where he will act on Dr. Luther's suggestion — consult a "good, pious man" and then *do as he says*. But, as a rule, the principle that the *purpose* of a thing identifies its true nature or essence is a guide which will permit a conscientious minister to say without hesitation either "Yes!" or "No!" When a West Point cadet attends the (Episcopalian) service at the military chapel, there is none who doesn't know that attendance is simply a military regulation and that no appearance of giving up their faith is given by those Lutherans, Methodists, and Baptists who attend, as little as the Lutheran or Catholic Congressman is guilty of denying his faith because he

stands in reverence while a Methodist chaplain conducts an opening service. There is a clear line of division — so clear, that once the principle is understood, there should be little need of indecision — between such religious services involving no confessional commitment on the part of those who attend and the unionistic service, which is designed to demonstrate how lightly those who take part hold their doctrinal convictions. "Why Lutherans Do Not Participate in Union Services" is a tract written by the Rev. J. W. Schilling of the American Lutheran Church. The author raises the question "But, you say: 'These people of other churches are sincere in their worship'" and answers it thus: "We thank God for their sincerity. Being sincere, they also remain Christians, if they only believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Their sin, of changing the Word of God, is a sin of ignorance or weakness; it is not a willful sin. Hence God forgives them that sin, for Jesus' sake; and they remain His children and heirs of heaven. But if we Lutherans should join with them in their worship and thereby sanction their false teachings, that would not be a sin of ignorance or weakness on our part. It would be a willful sin; and the curse which God pronounces upon those who change His Word would fall upon us." And thus Dr. J. L. Neve (U. L. C.) in a treatise written in 1918 in a discussion of the Galesburg Rule ("Lutheran Pulpits for Lutheran Ministers Only"): "Can we jointly with those conduct a service whose fundamental views regarding doctrine we must reject? Under such conditions how can our ministers exchange pulpits and officiate at the same altars? Would they not place truth and error on the same level? Would they not thereby declare as indifferent the truth as it is known and confessed by us? And would not the strong conviction which we have gained from the Scriptures and which we publicly announce through our church connection, be degraded into mere opinion, yes, a mistaken opinion?"

Dr. T. F. Gullixson, in a treatise entitled *The Fellowship Question*, reports that Mr. Burnquist, when Governor of Minnesota, declined an invitation to sit on the platform at a political meeting in these words: "Another reason for declining your invitation is the possibility of construing my presence at your partisan campaign rally, by some, as an endorsement of your propaganda." He also tells about a pan-Protestant celebration of the Augsburg Confession, in which the President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Prussia refused to participate. "That he was correct in his refusal was revealed also by the fact that an Evangelical minister who had charge of the reading of the Augsburg Confession did not hesitate to omit some parts of the articles because they condemned Reformed theology."

In the *Lutheran* of February 9, 1928, Rev. D. B. Bravin writes under the heading "Goodwill Banquetites" about certain observations which he made at a banquet which brought together Jews, Catholics, and Protestants for the promotion of interreligious good feeling. The writer noted that all speakers at the banquet tried to promote good will by denying the distinctive doctrines of their religious denomination. "Christians were wary not to identify themselves too closely with Jesus. Such apologetic remarks as 'I cannot help being born in my faith' or 'We all travel in the same direction, only by different routes,' and 'There is not going to be any proselytizing here,' were goodwill slogans, phrases often repeated by the thoughtless. But since they are not true, they cannot bring about goodwill in place of ill. We are *not* born in a faith; we do *not* all travel in the same direction; and proselytizing *will* ever remain a principle of the Christian faith. It is as much a command as is Baptism or the Lord's Supper.

"A Jewish Reform Rabbi led the 200 Christians in grace-before-meat, omitting the name of Jesus, of course; and

a Catholic priest pronounced the benediction, also omitting the name of Jesus out of deference to the Jews present. So Jesus was not invited to the goodwill banquet; He would have been an unwelcome guest if He had come."

The report closes with a reference to Matt. 10:32, 33.

Dr. Schmauk tells of the discouraging experiences he had as member of the Pennsylvania Chautauqua. Dr. Sandt quotes him to this effect:

"The writer has not been connected with the Pennsylvania Chautauqua for many years, to the unanimous regret (so they said) of the Chautauquans, and resigned partly because he found that his name on the letterhead of the blanks of this institution, and his official contact with men of all kinds of religious convictions from an agnostic like John Fiske and evolutionists like Lyman Abbott, on the one hand, to Roman Catholic priests on the other, was so liable to be misunderstood as a religious endorsement and made such great demands on his time to prevent a religious compromise on his part that he considered it safe, as a Lutheran, since the institution was no longer in a situation to affect the contiguous territory in a religious way, to resign his connection. In this he was supported by the word of his friend Dr. Trumbull, who himself also on very different grounds always declined to notice any of the Chautauqua movements in this country. That word was that 'there is a duty of refusing to do good.'"^{*}

Altar Fellowship

One of the most precious privileges of the child of God, the fellowship of Holy Communion, is conditioned not only by the general Biblical principles regarding unionism, but also, in particular, by the instructions contained in the words of institution and in 1 Cor. 10:15-17 and 1 Cor. 11:20-32. The

^{*} Sandt, *Th. E. Schmauk, A Biographical Sketch*, p. 259.

conditions for fellowship at the Lord's Table are: the common confession regarding the substitutionary work of the Savior and faith in the forgiveness of sins wrought by His death and transmitted in the Eucharist; belief in the Real Presence; an appreciation of the difference between the sacramental eating and drinking and that of an ordinary meal; the ability to examine oneself before partaking of the Sacrament; the absence of obvious unworthiness because of unwillingness to repent. For these reasons not only a common Communion service with the heterodox is forbidden, but also with such as are temporarily or permanently unable to meet the conditions laid down in the Word of God. If men deny the essence and the efficacy of the Lord's Supper, for example, by declaring the earthly elements to be only symbols of Christ's body and blood; if there is some other difference in the doctrinal standpoint of various church bodies which render true unity impossible; if children have not yet reached the age and the stage of knowledge when they can truly examine themselves; if people are unconscious, or intoxicated, or insane — all these situations render altar fellowship impossible.

The reasons for the practice called Close Communion have often been stated. We would sum them up as follows. We practice Close Communion, first of all, because true love for the neighbor demands it. St. Paul warns against coming unworthily and eating and drinking damnation to one's self. If through our carelessness some one "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself," are we guiltless? Secondly, the self-examination required by Scripture demands Close Communion. It is obvious that this self-examination requires some knowledge of the fundamental truths of God's Word. It is for this reason that we do not permit our children to go to the Lord's Supper until after they have been well instructed in the Christian faith. Some people seem to imagine

that because Lutherans do not commune any except their own members they hereby mean that all others are not true Christians. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Do we not accept our baptized children as Christians? Certainly we do, but the Lord's Supper is for such Christians only as are able to examine themselves as to their sins and their faith in Christ. By not admitting non-Lutherans to our altars we also do not say that they have not the requisite knowledge for self-examination. But we do thereby affirm that we have no assurance as to their knowledge and have no way of ascertaining what they know, believe, and confess. In the third place, we have a salutary custom among us that each member who desires to commune announces this fact beforehand to the pastor. This arrangement enables the pastor as steward of the mysteries of God to exercise the necessary supervision over those to whom he administers the Sacrament. Open Communion would do away with this sound practice. Finally, fidelity to the truth demands Close Communion. To other Protestants, bread and wine are simply a symbol and reminder of the absent body and blood of Christ. To us, bread and wine are the means by which the body and blood of the Savior are conveyed unto us. If one view is true, the other must be false. To practice Open Communion is to put the stamp of approval upon what we believe to be false; and this should be to us not mere opinion but a conviction. (Condensed from *Lutheran Standard*.)

Dr. Sigismund Fritschel of the Iowa Synod's Theological Seminary at Dubuque, in an article contributed in 1899 to the *Lutheran Cyclopaedia*, stressed the confessional nature of the Lord's Supper in these terms: "The unity of outward church communion in which the individual communicants are bound together presupposes their unity of faith and confession. Where such division and disunion has taken place, that communions with different confessions exist be-

side each other, there it is not possible, as the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 11:20 (*ouk estin*, it cannot be) to celebrate the Lord's Supper in common. It is the sad inevitable result of the present division of the visible Church that now every separate church communion must celebrate the communion separately, and neither the members of one can participate in the celebration of the other, nor can the one admit the members of the other. For if the Lord's Supper is a confessional act, in which the communion that celebrates it confesses its faith publicly and solemnly, so that those who participate take part in this confession publicly and solemnly, then the Lutheran who takes part in the celebration of the sacrament of a communion of different faith in the most public and emphatic manner confesses the false faith, which is here confessed, and therefore publicly denies the faith of his Church, even though he adheres to it in his heart."

"There is a common ground for all Christians *in Christ*. Those whom Christ recognizes, despite their errors and imperfections, are already one with us in Christ. They may not be one with us in mind and faith, they may not be one with us in those particular parts of our mind and faith which we feel divinely called to stand for and exposit, and hence we may be unable to feel and say that they are in a common brotherhood of faith because we earnestly believe that, although Christ can receive them as they are unto Himself without danger to His truth, we cannot do so with the same safety. Christ can do all things. We must do in accordance with our convictions."*

Elsewhere Dr. Schmauk expresses the cardinal place which Holy Communion has in the fellowship question by saying: "A minister who joins honestly in a union movement

* Sandt, *Biography of Schmauk*, p. 267.

would have to admit the evangelist or revivalist into his own pulpit and allow him to partake of the Lord's Supper. He would thereby be eliminating everything distinctive for which the Lutheran Church stands."*

Now, it is true, yes, a truism, that the principle "Lutheran Communicants for Lutheran Altars Only" (Galesburg Rule) is not a direct quotation from Holy Writ. The New Testament does not even say that denominational limits must be observed in administering the Lord's Supper. Ordinarily we find this the only means for the administration of the Sacrament that will satisfy the Scriptural demands. But we have never so stressed the Lord's Supper as a meal of fellowship that its primary purpose as a means of grace is thereby obscured and anyone in every sense "worthy" of the Sacrament deprived of its consolation. The experience has been a common one that in our inner mission work we have communed the sick under circumstances when no formal profession of faith, such as is demanded for affiliation with our churches, could be demanded. Again, it has been our practice in the case of those who come to us from other Lutheran bodies, also those from the Evangelical Synod, that we assured ourselves of their worthiness in agreement with the texts from First Corinthians and then communed them. With the present mass movements of population, problems have arisen which have not confronted the Church in any former age. The migrations of nations during the Middle Ages were migrations of pagans and Mohammedans. Now countless thousands of Christians, of Lutherans, are on the move, either through enlistment in the armed forces or through the work in war industries. Under the circumstances we are compelled to ask, simply, Can this person, this family be communed with the as-

* Sandt, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

surance that I am distributing the Lord's Supper to those who come as worthy guests — penitent and with a desire for forgiveness through the merits of Christ? Yet those involved are not members of church bodies which teach falsely regarding the Lord's Supper, but teach according to the unaltered Augsburg Confession regarding this article. And so it happens that a conference addressed the faculty of Concordia Seminary with an inquiry about the principles which should govern our practice when persons coming from the United Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Conference, temporarily located in the community, come to us for Communion. The faculty's answer read:

"There is at present no fellowship between ourselves and the larger Lutheran bodies mentioned in the inquiry. This means that we do not admit their members to communicant membership simply on certificates or letters of transfer, but only after satisfying ourselves that with regard to doctrine and life they qualify as worthy communicants at our altars and are willing to join our congregations. 'Temporary residence' is a term which would be difficult to define exactly and cannot be a factor which would cause us to depart from this practice."

In other words, we give Holy Communion to those who are according to the Word of God entitled to it and for whom the Lord's Supper was instituted.

This, naturally, applies with twofold force with regard to the men in the armed forces who are not in full fellowship with the Missouri Synod and yet desire to partake of the Lord's Supper when celebrated by a Missouri Synod chaplain or pastor. We hold that the regulations adopted by our Army and Navy Commission are not only justified by the circumstances, but are a simple application of what remains essential in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace. The regulations read:

"In exceptional cases synodical fellowship is not a necessary precondition for admission to the Lord's Supper. We must guard against legalism on the one hand and laxity on the other. The chaplain or pastor may commune such men in the armed forces as are conscious of the need of repentance and hold the essence of faith, including doctrines of the real presence and of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace, and profess acceptance thereof."

It has been said that this procedure constitutes a case in casuistry. This is not correct. Concerning "cases in casuistry" our fathers have said that "even well-instructed, orthodox theologians may be in doubt as to the proper procedure." Such is not the case in the present instance, when we consider the communing of men who are facing death either on the high seas or on the battlefield. While "exceptional," because in the nature of the case no congregational or even denominational factors are involved, such celebration of the Lord's Supper is not an expression of indifference to doctrine, does not acknowledge error to be co-ordinate with truth, and does not give the appearance of complicity with heterodox churches. Such was indeed the case when at a Communion service in Columbus, Ohio, a thousand clergymen of twenty denominations attending the Ohio Pastors' convention, partook of the Sacrament. It was announced by the chairman of the meeting as "an unique Communion service of all denominations" and as "marking the growth in Christian unity." But anyone who understands the elementary distinction between substance and accident, between the *materiale* of an act and its *formale*, will see the radical difference between a Communion service based on unionistic premises and such exceptional cases—exceptional, however great their number may be—as now fall to the ministration of our pastors in defense areas and our chaplains with the armed forces.

CHAPTER X

Prayer Fellowship

*After this manner threrefore pray ye:
Our Father.* MATT. 6:9

WE have seen in another chapter that participation in joint prayer (the prayer of a Christian gathered locally together with others) is not only permitted, but is enjoined upon the believer. The Lord's Prayer with its first person plural is itself sufficient evidence for the right and the duty of Christians to worship together. Other texts have been found to teach, either by precept or example, the same lesson.

Accordingly, the Catechism of the Missouri Synod, in Question 222, "Why are we to say 'Our Father'?" has this answer: "Because all believers are in Christ the children of one Father and should, therefore, pray for and with each other." In the new Catechism authorized by the Missouri Synod the answer reads: "We say 'Our Father' because the believers in Christ throughout the world are the children of one Father and therefore pray for and with one another."

In Acts 2:42 prayer fellowship is not identified with Christian fellowship in general, but is distinguished from the general *koinonia* of the Christian Church and from altar fellowship. The texts which specifically treat of joint prayer or common prayers among believers have likewise been treated in an earlier chapter.

Let it be said at once that in view of the general principles of fellowship dealt with in these chapters, one possibility is definitely excluded: Our prayers must never become part of a public religious service or meeting in which Scriptural truth is denied, compromised, or ignored, in which error is propagated, or in which men who are present as the avowed exponents of error officiate. By offering prayer in such a gathering we should become remiss in our duty as witnesses to the truth and make ourselves partakers of other men's sins (1 Tim. 5:22). We may expand this statement by quoting the resolution of the Missouri Synod (1935 convention, *Proceedings*, page 293): "Scripture very plainly prohibits compromise of the truth, indifference to doctrine, unionism, and giving of offense, and therefore forbids every kind of prayer fellowship which involves one of these objectionable features."

To illustrate the kind of joint prayer which compromises the truth, gives offense, and is unionistic, we quote the report of the observance of the "World Day of Prayer" featured by a national committee of churchwomen some years ago. It was an Episcopal affair, in which the local pastors and also lay representatives from the various Protestant bodies would attend at the service and assist in the program. More recently, it has become the custom to gather a priest, a rabbi, and a Protestant minister in some parish hall, if not at the synagogue or at the church, for a union service at which invariably a prayer is offered in the name of all participants on the platform and on the floor. At

Houston, Texas, the local paper sent a reporter to one of these affairs, which was written up under the heading "Presbyterianism in the Synagog." The reporter took note of the fact that while the Presbyterian chaplain preached a fine patriotic sermon, "he was careful, of course, not to tread on ground where the Jewish and Protestant faiths differ." The reporter continues: "Irreverently, we wondered how he was going to get around mentioning Jesus Christ in his closing prayer. He concluded by saying, 'We humbly pray —' then paused about long enough to say (to himself), 'In Jesus' name'; and added aloud, 'Amen.' Which seemed fair enough to us."

The text of such a prayer was reported from one of these interfaith meetings held at Urbana, Ill., with a Jewish rabbi, a Roman Catholic priest, and a Protestant minister officiating. The three men had collaborated on the prayer, which read as follows:

"Almighty God, we who are members of different races and faith, desire together Thy fatherhood and our kinship with each other. In our difference we find that many of our hopes, our fears, our aspirations are one. Thou art our Father, and we are Thy children.

"We are heartily sorry for the mists of envy, fear, hatred, suspicion, and greed which have blinded our eyes and thrust us asunder. May the light that comes from Thee scatter these mists, cleanse our hearts, and give health to our spirits. Teach us to put away all bitterness and walk together in the ways of human friendship.

"Open our eyes to see that as nature abounds in variation, so differences in human beings make for richness in the common life. May we give honor where honor is due — regardless of race, color, or circumstance. Deepen our respect for unlikeness and our eagerness to understand one another. Through the deeper unities of the spirit in sympathy, in-

sight, and co-operation may we transcend our differences. May we gladly share with each other our best gifts and together seek for a human world fashioned in good under Thy guidance. Amen."

This prayer not only omits the name of Christ, but makes a definite claim that the differences between Christians and Jews are transcended by a "deeper unity." Who is not reminded here of the Christless prayers of the lodge, in which Catholics, Protestants, Jews, agnostics, and infidels unite before a common altar?

To say that we object to such prayers because they are "unionistic" is, of course, a begging of the question. It is the familiar fallacy of reasoning in a circle — taking for granted something that is yet to be proved. Writing in the *Australasian Theological Review*, July, 1940, on the subject "What Constitutes Unionism?" Dr. H. Hamann points out the fact that for one thing, the terms "unionism" and "syncretism" have been inexactly used in the present discussion and that the attempt to solve all related problems by the simple definition "Religious unionism consists in joint worship and work of those not united in doctrine" errs by proving too much. "If this definition," says Dr. Hamann, "is to stand with all its implications and in all conceivable circumstances, so that the word 'joint' includes every form of local presence, then the whole question would be settled, and this paper might stop at this point!" Manifestly, so to define unionism, as to include every case of prayer in the same place with non-Lutherans or the ungodly, and then to condemn certain forms of joint prayer as "unionistic prayer fellowship" is a clear case of reasoning in a circle. You assume that unionism includes certain prayers, and from this you conclude that certain prayers are unionistic. This will never do.

Nor will it do to identify joint prayer absolutely with

prayer fellowship. Also on this point Dr. Hamann has some very pertinent remarks, which will be found in the section from his essay which the readers will find reproduced *in toto* in the next chapter. It sums up to this. There is a praying which is not individual, but is a praying jointly with others which, however, does not constitute or presume Christian fellowship. In order to discover whether a prayer is of this nature, we examine the circumstances surrounding it and also the purpose for which this praying together in one place has occurred. Frequently believers pray in the presence of others, the latter joining the true confessors as they choose. This was the case in the well-known instance on board ship, when Paul gave thanks to God in the presence of the entire ship's company (Acts 27:35). On the other hand, a believer's duty to his employer may make his presence necessary at prayer of a false kind (2 Kings 5:17-19). That such cases are in their nature exceptional (by this term nothing is predicated of their frequency) goes without saying. It is possible that an individual prays together with others under circumstances which involve no confession of denominational tenets or where at least its confessional character is completely overshadowed by its devotional aspect. Again we may call this exceptional or casuistry, and once more we make no assertion about the frequency of such cases by using these terms. A bomb is dropped from a plane, destroying a school, and fifty children perish. Many of them cannot be identified. There is a mass burial in which the entire community participates. The various denominations represented in the bereaved families are represented by their clergy, and a Lutheran is asked to speak a prayer. Only by a most wooden and mechanical interpretation of the anti-unionistic principle can we forbid such participation. Joint prayer is sinful prayer fellowship, when the situation is such that in fairness and good reason one must interpret the act as expressive of

the toleration of error, of compromising with the truth. And we are not compelled to resort to guess work in this matter. The nature of the occasion may have the outward *materiale* of a unionistic service. But unless the *formale* is just that, *i. e.*, unless the purpose of the gathering has this end (*causa finalis*) in view, of uniting in an act of worship those who are not united in the faith, the prayer offered on such an occasion cannot be called "unionistic." In the case of the ceremony at a mass burial, a child of seven will know that the purpose is not a religious function, but the burial of the dead under circumstances which compels or makes very natural a community funeral.

The outward framework of a broadcast may be that of a church service. There may be prayers, Scripture readings, a sermon. But again it is the purpose of the occasion that tells us what it truly is — and the reader should be reminded that by "purpose" we do not mean the (subjective) purpose of the participants, but the (objective) purpose inherent in the act itself. As when a newspaper puts on a religious broadcast in which an employee, announced as such, acts as program director, possibly with a Scripture reading, closing prayer, etc., while an invited speaker makes the address. We say, while this has the framework of a service, it is not a *service* in any sense, but is a *program*, and there is not the slightest indication that the actors in the program by their action express a religious fellowship. Naturally, when the announcer or the guest speaker makes a declaration to this effect as they do their parts, the situation is completely changed. But the beauty of it is that the listeners-in are immediately aware of the change in purpose of the broadcast, as they would be also if in one radio program three speakers from different denominations were lined up for the purpose of telling the community what intimate fellowship is theirs in spite of doctrinal disagreement.

But let us assume that the rare case develops when the purpose of a given occasion is not so clear that the public or even the Lutheran minister invited to speak a prayer can form a well-grounded opinion. Unless the element of offense enters in, the principle must prevail that the New Testament contains no prohibitions of the uttering of a Christian prayer at any time or in any place. In other words, outside the element of offense, we must demand proof for his position not of him who prays, but of him who forbids a Christian to pray to his God. And since offense has been mentioned, lest a new type of legalism enter into the handling of the argument, let it be understood that he who claims to be offended must prove from the Word of God that the other has done wrong. Or if it be the brother weak in the faith, whom the objector tries to keep from being offended — and the possibility of such giving of real offense is not denied in any part of our discussion — we are faced with a case in casuistry which must be adjudged according to the laws of charity and common sense.

From the above it is plain that prayer may be representative in the sense of being spoken with and in behalf of others, yet is not “promiscuous” or “unionistic” prayer. Such prayer may be sinful *per accidens* — on account of some circumstance or condition, namely, if by praying with others we treat the differences as unessential; this is denial of the truth or at least gives the appearance of denial, and is giving offense in the Biblical sense, that is, tempting, or giving occasion to others to sin; in this case, leading the participants from another communion to remain satisfied with their false doctrine by giving the appearance as if we condoned it.

Praying in private, as when we are asked to “lead in prayer” at a luncheon club, a boarding house, or in the home of a Baptist, etc., is a related problem. The essay of Dr. Hamann (see below) makes clear that in every case it

is the same question: Do I give the appearance — and let me say, *actually* give the appearance to others of being indifferent to the doctrines of our faith? On the answer to this question will depend my judgment of this prayer. The same, of course, applies to those who *are led* in prayer, as when a Lutheran man or woman attends a sectarian, let us say Presbyterian, school which requires attendance at chapel exercises. When you as a student attend such exercises, you certainly do not intend to give the impression as though Lutheran and Presbyterian theology are all the same to you. Your presence is fully understood as being simply in line with the regulations of the school. When there is no exhibition of a spiritual participation in such exercises — this, of course, is possible — the fellow students have no warrant in good reason to believe that by attending these exercises you are doing more than accepting the routine of the school. Fellowship relations are entirely out of the question. Exercises which demand of those who attend that they participate actively with a prayer of their own or by giving a testimony of Christian “experience” are indeed in another class and cannot be participated in by a Lutheran without denial of his faith. Why is this so evident? Because the very intent and purpose of the gathering has been changed into a different thing — into a “prayer meeting.”

Finally, there are occasions when we do signify a joining of interests in our prayer, as when we meet with those who come to us for the purpose of establishing with us an agreement in the teachings of Christianity. Various cases may be distinguished under this head:

It is conceivable that we meet with representatives of Lutheran bodies which in their *publica doctrina* are known to have a divided testimony — the truth concerning a certain article being confessed in some quarters while in others there is a prevalence of error. When the first approach was

sought between the Lutherans of the East and of the West, Dr. Walther and his associates took a prominent part in the proceedings. There were free conferences in which the matter of Lutheran union was discussed on the basis of the Augsburg Confession. Yet those who in the 50's met with our delegates for such conferences were far from orthodox in their position. At that time one of the leaders of the Ohio Synod was Master of a Masonic lodge and in religion close to being a deist. We find the leading Lutheran professor at Gettysburg "publicly protesting against the distinctive Lutheran doctrines concerning the Sacraments — also against those of original sin, and the Person of Christ." (Jacobs, *Church History*, p. 367.) "In Pennsylvania there was merely indifference to doctrine; in New York, under the leadership of Frederick Henry Quitman, there was Universalism and outright rationalism." (R. H. Johnson in *The Lutheran Church Quarterly*, July, 1930.) Rev. Shober, a member of the North Carolina Synod, made the following statement in 1816: "I have attentively examined the doctrine of the Episcopalian Church and read many excellent authors of the Episcopalians, know the Methodist doctrine from their book *Practice of Methodism*, and am acquainted with the Baptist doctrine so far as they admit and admire Jesus as Savior. Among all those classes who worship Jesus as a God I see nothing of importance to prevent a cordial union." This was the theological background of the synods which met in Columbus, Ohio, in 1856. The Missouri Synod was represented by Dr. Walther and other delegates, and the sessions were opened with the singing of a hymn, a prayer, and the confession of the Apostles' Creed.

It is unthinkable that Walther should have made the condition — unless you omit the invocation, we shall not meet with you. Walther, who throughout his literary life expressed himself as estimating beyond an outward *Recht-*

gläubigkeit the spirit and the attitude of those whom he met for colloquy! He had much to say in an official report about the weaknesses and errors with which some of these bodies were afflicted, but what he emphasized was the spirit that permeated the conference, "the spirit of truth, of love, and of peace." He was happy that "prejudices had been removed: many misunderstandings had been cleared up; the members found that they were traveling on the same road with the same goal in view; the consciousness of a common membership in one Church had been awakened and nurtured; the hand of brotherhood had been given under the banner of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession according to its simple, literal meaning; in common acknowledgment of a common guilt all had bowed before God in common worship and had implored His grace and forgiveness for all."

At various times our leaders met in convention with the Tennessee and Holston Synods. We know that Dr. Walther met with the General Council at Jamestown, New York, in 1874. All these meetings were opened with prayer. There is no hint in our literature so far as our acquaintance with it goes of ever the question having been raised whether an opening prayer at such sessions should be a hindrance to our participation.

Since then we have had a new generation of leaders in the Eastern synods, a Krauth, a Mann, a Krotel, a Spaeth, a Schaeffer. Since then there has been a Theodore Emmanuel Schmauk, whose flaming words are quoted in Dr. Sandt's biography (page 179): "Doctrine is intellectual and spiritual bone. It is principle. Better a dozen diverse living species, each separately ribbed and tempered, than amalgamate them all by removing the bones and boiling them down together into one great cake of sheep meat jelly. A Church without distinctive doctrinal principle is a vertebrate without *vetrebrae*."

But there were controversies that cut deeply into the life of the Western synods. For several decades, until the adoption of the Davenport Theses in 1873, the matter of Open Questions was in debate between Missouri and Iowa. After 1880 the controversy on election and conversion lined up on one side the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, and the Norwegian Synod, and the other side Ohio, Iowa, and the United Norwegian Church. The debate was conducted with great bitterness on both sides, and the colloquies which were held differed markedly from the colloquies of an earlier period conducted by Missouri and Iowa. In these later conferences the delegates appeared frankly as contestants who were fighting for a cause. The theological argument, buttressed with texts and with quotations from the fathers, held the center of interest. There was not only no hope of getting the bodies together, there was not even an expressed intention in that direction. When the argument arose about opening these conferences with prayer, Dr. F. Bente defended his refusal to open with prayers by an argumentation which we cannot accept entirely in its reasoning, but which defended a proposition essentially sound. How, indeed, could there be a joint prayer when each party was there to work theological havoc with the opposition, when each party, if it were honest, could only pray down defeat on the opposing forces?

Again there is a change in the American Lutheran scene. We have, for more than twenty years, with interruptions, engaged in the discussion of doctrine for the purpose of eliminating that which is divisive and achieving unity on the basis of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions. There are chiefly four bodies involved — the American Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church, the Norwegian Lutheran Church, and the Augustana Synod. There are no negotiations for the establishment of fellowship under way

with the two last mentioned. With some United Lutheran Church pastors our own clergy have had conferences for the discussion of doctrine and practice. The question arises — where such meetings are conducted, shall they be opened with prayer? We return to the proposition which forms the major premise of this entire discussion, the proposition which affirms the right of a Christian to pray with other Christians at all times and in every circumstance unless by such prayer he is compelled to suppress some doctrine of Scripture or pretend a unity which as a matter of fact does not exist. Such joint worship would be syncretistic, "union-istic." By no stretch of this definition can we make it apply to such meetings as we are now considering. If there is a group of United Lutheran Church ministers who wish to hear from us as to our doctrine, we have most ample authority to meet them for discussion, and we know that such discussion will be God-pleasing. 1 Pet. 3:15. Who would be so bold as to deny us and those honest searchers for the truth who meet with us the right to approach God with a petition to bless those who speak and those who hear?

With the American Lutheran Church the Missouri Synod since 1938 has a doctrinal platform declared sufficient for future fellowship on the theological side and awaiting chiefly the removal of certain differences in practice and adjustment of synodical relationships before union may be declared. The resolutions of 1938 as well as those of 1941 call for a meeting of conferences for the discussion of the public doctrine of these bodies. Furthermore, through the meetings which have been held, there are now joint conferences which have disclosed doctrinal agreement on all points, agreement also in principles of church life, and it is a matter of public knowledge that on both sides testimony to the truth and against error is being given. Such persons are in *statu confessionis*. We thus have the case of meeting for doc-

trinal discussion with those who publicly confess the truth and with us testify against error, but whose synodical body is not yet in a recognized state of fellowship, not because of difference in the doctrines of belief, but because conditions mutually agreed upon have not yet been fulfilled. From all that has been set forth above regarding the conditions of fellowship it is evident that in opening and closing meetings *under such circumstances*, joint prayer would not give justifiable offense because it would be neither a token of indifference nor an encouragement of a false attitude, least of all would it constitute a fraternal relation to a heterodox Christian. The faculty of Concordia Seminary in January, 1942, expressed itself to this effect: "We cannot say that under all and any circumstances a joint prayer with one not in confessional agreement with us is prayer *fellowship*. An act must always be judged in the light of its attending circumstances. Offering a prayer, for instance, at the table of a non-Lutheran or uniting in a table prayer under such circumstances is not necessarily of a *confessional* character and cannot therefore from the outset be condemned as forbidden prayer *fellowship*. Even so, circumstances under which a group meets for the purpose of discussing their doctrinal differences on the basis of Scripture in order to arrive at a doctrinal agreement may be such that a joint prayer for the Spirit's guidance cannot be condemned as forbidden prayer *fellowship*. Such concrete cases belong into the field of casuistry. As yet, we have not established church fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. Since not a few of their pastors fundamentally agree with us, the question whether a joint prayer may be offered at a conference must be decided by the participants in accordance with the particular circumstances under which that conference is held." This opinion is based on the Synodical Resolution of 1935, which says in effect that

prayer fellowship is sinful only in cases when the implication of a joint prayer is a spiritual solidarity which does not exist.

Two remarks are in place at the close of this chapter. We are well enough aware of the difference of conviction which has until now prevailed in the Missouri Synod regarding this matter of prayer fellowship. There is still an impression, mistaken as it appears to your authors, that, (1) all joint or common prayer constitutes prayer fellowship, and (2) that prayer fellowship is practically identical with church fellowship. Where such convictions are held, and they may be held in all sincerity and without arrogance or pharisaism, we do not advocate the introduction of invocations and closing prayers at intersynodical conferences. Where the conscience is still bound in such definitions of prayer fellowship, it must be respected. Then again, it is possible to make a distinction between official synodical committees on union and the relation of unofficial clergy, meeting in conference. The former take on more of an official character, and one can understand the reluctance of, as it were, committing the Church to a policy regarding which many minds are at variance.

Finally, a word about offense.

It will never do to discountenance prayer at intersynodical conferences for the reason that "this gives offense." The brother who is offended must justify his case from the Scriptures. We hold that no Scripture can be quoted that would condemn prayer under circumstances as last described. This is not disobeying the texts which bid us avoid those who bring in divisions and offenses. These men, who come to discuss with us in order to receive a clear understanding of our position, these many years misrepresented in popular writings; or who come to us for a fraternal discussion of doctrine in order to be strengthened in the truth—

these are not people who are attempting to bring in divisions and offenses — on the contrary, they meet with us to remove divisions and cause for offense! Where does Scripture say that we must avoid such? Where is the right to plead “offense”? We have regard for the weak and spare their consciences whenever more harm would be done to them than can be gained in strength for the cause of the truth. There are occasions when we must refrain from the use of our Christian freedom. But all the texts in Romans and Corinthians that speak of such deal with the use of adiaphora, not with the inherent rights of the believer and of the Christian congregation. There are Christian privileges which no one can curtail by saying, “You will offend me and others” —. Which Christian, indeed, would want to interfere by pleading the factor of “offense” with another Christian’s efforts to carry out the commands — Preach the Gospel to every creature! Strengthen with the Lord’s body and blood those who come in the knowledge of their weakness in temptation and for comfort in imminent death! Pray with every child of God that His Name may be hallowed and His Kingdom come! In matters of indifference (adiaphora) we not only may, but on occasion must, limit the exercise of our freedom for the sake of the weak brother. But this does not destroy the priority of the Gospel and of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER XI

Is There a Unionism in Private Conduct?*

*That ye might be filled with the knowledge
of His will in all wisdom and spiritual
understanding.* COL. 1:9

WHEN a person joins a congregation, or goes to church, or receives Holy Communion, or has a child baptized, he is carrying out what he conceives to be religious duties, or is at any rate performing actions possessing a definitely religious significance. But people go to many places, attend various functions, meet their fellows in hundreds or thousands of situations and circumstances without being actuated primarily by religious motives or without any religious considerations at all. If in these circumstances the religious element or factor is somehow injected or is somehow present, the question of whether or not we have a case of unionism is not nearly so simple as

* Reprinted from an article by Prof. H. Hamann in the *Australasian Theological Review*, July-Sept., 1940.

some seem to think. Certainly the Christian always and everywhere is bound to confess the truth; never and nowhere dare he strike a compromise with error. But the question is just this: Do such situations imply a compromise with error or a denial of the truth, or do they not?

I must begin by saying that a mechanical and automatic application of words like "Depart from them," "Avoid them," "Do not receive him," seems to me inadequate and out of place. These and other Scripture words of like tenor do help to establish the great Scripture principles which we have treated as axiomatic, and upon which we have based our argument so far: I mean the great principles that only the pure doctrine of God's Word has the right of existence in the Church; that all error and false teaching is sin and must be rejected; that the Church has the duty of confessing the truth and of condemning error. But the unthinking, indiscriminate application of such injunction as "Avoid them," etc., to every Christian who is not a member of the orthodox church, in order to show what is and what is not unionism, seems to me inconclusive and, in the good sense of the term, uncritical. The ease, the fatal facility with which such a thing can be done, carries us away. But surely sound exegetical principles demand — and that means that sound Lutheran principles demand — that we carefully examine both the text and the context, and that we then with equal care seek to determine when, where, and to what extent such injunctions are applicable to the religious life of our times.

For one thing, by far the most of these texts are aimed at false teachers; usually at wicked ones; usually at those who subvert the Gospel of Christ. Then again, the entire milieu, all the conditions and circumstances, the whole background — all that is quite different in our days from what it was in the times of the Apostles. There were false teachers in the early Church, as there are now. But there were not

in St. Paul's day large bodies of Christians sharing the same belief to a very large extent, nor bodies of Lutherans with members the rank and file of whom believe practically the selfsame doctrines, although their leaders — it is a fact that the existing doctrinal differences are argued mainly by the leaders, the pastors — though their leaders differ on certain teachings. We shall not depart by a single hair's breadth from the principles before enunciated; but the question now is not: "What is to be our attitude over against false teachers?" but: "What constitutes unionism in the private lives of our Christians? And how far are injunctions like 'Avoid them' applicable to Mr. Smith or Mr. Brown next door?" When St. Paul warned his readers against Judaizing teachers and other false teachers, and added the words: "Depart from such," they knew what he meant, *viz.*, "Do not be carried away by their error; do not let them mislead you; do not join them; do not link up with them." That surely is the essence of his warning; and that remains valid *for all times, as regards all errorists*. But that one of our members who, by force of circumstances, finds himself together at prayer with a member of the United Ev. Luth. Church of Australia,* let us say, is guilty of unionism because St. Paul writes of certain teachers: "Avoid them" — that has to be proved. That, to me, is a case of *non sequitur*.

We said that most of the texts usually cited in this connection warn against false teachers who deny the very Gospel of Christ and against men of wicked, evil, dissolute life. No objection can be raised against extending the warning here given *to all false teachers*, including those whose error is comparatively slight; for it is Scripture teaching that all doctrine in the Church is to agree with Holy Writ, and that all merely human teachings and opinions are to be

* An affiliate of the American Lutheran Church.
Toward Lutheran Union

shunned. I do not see, however, that such passages help us to determine what our conduct must be in certain contacts with people belonging to heterodox communities — people who are not teachers at all, who are not at all trying to seduce us, and whose views we do not for a moment propose to share. The injunction to avoid them might still be urged as a warning not to be entangled in the error which their Church teaches and confesses. But with regard to the question: "What is unionism in the private life of a Christian?" they seem to me to be irrelevant.

I shall tentatively answer the question which forms the heading of this part of the essay thus: *There can be no question of unionism where the presumption of unwarranted church fellowship or religious fellowship, or the presumption of the denial or compromise of the truth, or the presumption of the toleration of error, cannot in reason and in fairness arise.*

We now proceed to test certain specific instances.

Let us begin with the case which is perhaps the one occurring most frequently. *I am a guest in someone's house* — someone not in communion with me — or he is a guest in my house. If grace is said at table or if prayers follow the morning or the evening meal, must I bid my guest begone, if I am the host; or if I am the guest, must I excuse myself at that stage or show by an attitude of studied indifference or non-attention that I dissociate myself from the proceedings? I cannot see the least justification for such conduct; still less do I consider it necessary in order to avoid unionism. In my house I conduct my devotions as usual; if my guest asks to be excused, that is his business. Similarly, I might ask to be excused if I am a guest in someone else's house. It will be admitted that this can hardly be done without a grave breach of decorum. But the real question is: *Must* such an act be shunned as an act of unionism? My

reply is: No. The parties are meeting, not as Lutheran and Presbyterian, not as representatives of the Ev. Luth. Synod of Australia and the United Ev. Luth. Church of Australia, but as relatives, or as friends, or their relation is for the present merely that of host and guest. Usually, the matter of church fellowship, of confession and doctrine, does not at all arise.

Perhaps we have all found ourselves in similar circumstances; one cannot live long in the world of men, still less get about the world a little, without encountering such situations. In India I have experienced such situations in the houses of non-Lutheran missionaries. Our "Missourian" position was very well known to them all; it never for a moment entered into the head of my host that I was running counter to my principles and practicing fellowship with his Church or that he was fellowshiping with me, in the technical sense of the word, because I sat at his table quietly and courteously while he, as the *pater familias*, conducted his customary devotion. It is so in the Australian Lutheran Church of today. Our own members, by keeping up their church affiliation and maintaining their separate witness, and more especially by refusing to enter into union services and union ventures, plainly give evidence that they are not in union and communion with the United Ev. Luth. Church of Australia. If, then, they are guests in the houses of United Ev. Luth. Church of Australia members and courteously listen while prayers are spoken or devotions conducted, they are not denying the truth, they are not condoning error, they are not practicing religious indifferentism by that act; they are simply behaving like normal, civilized, Christian men and women. There is plenty of opportunity to bear witness to the truth; the very fact that they remain apart from the United Ev. Luth. Church of Australia, refusing to join it and insisting upon full unity before fellowship can be es-

tablished, is eloquent witness. Hence in such cases, I hold, there can be no question of unionism, simply because the question of church fellowship, of denial of truth and condoning of error, does not at all arise in the minds of the people concerned, nor in the minds of others, for that matter.

However, the objection will be raised by some: but there is fellowship, *fellowship in prayer!* I might reply, as some do, that there is no fellowship in prayer: we are in such cases not praying *with* the others, we are simply *listening* to their prayers. But this all too nice distinction involves, at least normally, a psychological stopping up of your ears to prevent these prayers or Scripture passages — perhaps the people are using the same prayer book which you use — from making their wonted appeal to your soul. "Very well," says my friend the dialectician, "you are in that case praying by and for yourself, as the others are praying by and for themselves; there is no fellowship." I reply: If he can find comfort in this logical distinction and thereby save his conscience, by all means let him continue to do so! I prefer to argue the matter differently. When I have used the word "fellowship" in this paper, I have used it in the sense of full religious fellowship, which means that we acknowledge others as brethren in the faith who are in full agreement and harmony with us; with whom we have what the Germans call *glaubensbruederliche Gemeinschaft*. Now, when someone calls the conduct of which we are speaking "fellowship in prayer" or "prayer fellowship," he may be within his right in using that term, but he must allow me to point out that this is merely external "fellowship" and that he is obviously using the word "fellowship" in an altogether different meaning. I categorically deny that, by the acts mentioned in this paragraph, the establishment of religious fellowship is contemplated or insinuated, or indicated or consummated, or that such a purpose can even be pre-

sumed. Or does a man practice fellowship with Methodists because, when attending a Methodist church in order to hear an advertised performance of the oratorio *Elijah*, he unexpectedly finds himself listening to a prayer by the minister?

Of course, in the circumstances spoken of, situations may arise that would require us to act differently. If I have reason to suspect that my host — or my guest — considers my conduct as equivocal or that he thinks I am dealing with him on a basis of real fellowship instead of merely accepting a situation from which I can not in decency escape, then it is my duty to disabuse his mind of this mistake. The presence of false doctrine in what my *vis-à-vis* reads or says may render a disavowal on my part necessary — after he has finished, of course. Or suppose that my host and I have been discussing questions of doctrine; and suppose that, after tea, he were to say to me: "After all, these doctrines are of little consequence; let us now show that we still acknowledge each other as good Christians and brothers in the common faith by uniting in reading the Scriptures and in offering prayer." At once the circumstances would be materially altered. I should find myself *in statu confessionis*; it would be my duty to say: "*Quod non!* I shall sit here and listen to you; but I must disavow any fellowship with you; and my remaining here is emphatically not a sign of such fellowship!" And generally, should a person seek occasions for such contacts, he would lay himself open to the suspicion of trying to establish or to demonstrate fellowship where he has no right to do so.

Let us go on to speak of the attendance at churches and religious services of those with whom we are not in communion. Such attendance can hardly, in decency, be avoided at *weddings*, *funerals*, and similar occasions. In such cases, again, there can be no suspicion of unionism, because the

question of church fellowship simply does not arise; we are present for *personal* reasons — in the way of relationship, friendship, mourning, etc. This situation is not changed even though one or the other of those present should misunderstand our purpose; which will happen very rarely when it is a matter of weddings, funerals, or other services in which we are interested for family reasons. And how are we to act if we thus find ourselves in a gathering of heterodox Christians? The only rule that I can lay down is: Act like a courteous, civilized being; like a Christian; do not think it incumbent upon you to make a studied display of impoliteness, boorishness, and offensiveness in order to show that you are not at all interested in what is going on! It is certainly far better to stay away than to give an exhibition of ill breeding. Unnecessarily wounding the religious susceptibilities of others is as certainly a sin as is unionism. Hence, let him who can attend such meetings with a good conscience act respectfully and becomingly, and let others stay at home. As to details, it is impossible to mention every contingency that may arise. If, for the reasons stated, I should find myself in a Roman Catholic church (to select a very remote possibility), I should certainly omit to make genuflections toward the altar (where the body of the Lord is supposed to be kept), to sprinkle myself with "holy" water (a mere superstition), or to make the sign of the cross (which is not a religious custom of mine). Omission of these acts on the part of non-Catholics would not shock or outrage Catholic feelings, anyway.

To continue: we all claim the right — at least I do — of occasionally attending gatherings of heterodox Christians for reasons, let us say, of intellectual curiosity. We wish to hear a world-renowned lecturer or preacher; we wish to learn at first hand what a celebrated Modernist teaches; we should like to attend a meeting where mission work on the

South Sea Islands is to be illustrated by films. We claim that right, I say; and I think that we claim it legitimately, in Christian liberty. "All things are yours," says St. Paul (1 Cor. 3:21). The question of church fellowship, of confessing and rebutting error, does not at all arise here; we are simply listeners and spectators. If anyone thinks that he ought to stay away because of St. Paul's word "Avoid them," then let him stay away. On the question of how to act in such circumstances, I can only repeat what I said before: Remember that you are present at a religious or semireligious meeting, and conduct yourself accordingly. But what if the collection plate comes around? When this actually happened in the Exhibition Building, Adelaide, many years ago, a prominent theologian extricated himself from the dilemma by saying: "It costs money to arrange such a demonstration; I'm giving my shilling for the cost of the hall, the lights, etc." Others may prefer to pass up the plate. I find it impossible to frame rules for others; in this entire matter something will have to be left to the individual conscience.

A more important point is the following, perhaps. If we pastors claim the right to attend such gatherings upon occasion, it is difficult to see on what plea we could refuse that right to our parishioners. I think that no such attempt should be made. We may warn them; but if they insist, pointing to our example, we could only fall back upon the argument that we ministers, by reason of our special training and study, have "our senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14) to a higher degree than laymen and that we perhaps even have the duty of keeping ourselves informed about trends of thought and teaching in heterodox circles. On the other hand, they might argue that attendance of the pastor, who is the official representative of his flock, could more easily raise the presumption of unionism than could attendance on the part of laymen!

It goes without saying that attendance at other churches, *where no such special reason applies*, is wrong and unionistic. Frequent or habitual attendance at hererodox churches not only creates grave offense, but raises the presumption that the worshiper attends there to satisfy his spiritual needs, feels himself in fellowship with that church, and ignores doctrinal differences and religious error in the spirit of indifference.

A few other cases may be mentioned to round off this presentation.

The pastor who conducts divine service *on board ship* is certainly not practicing unionism. He is preaching to a mixed assembly, to people of unknown denominational affiliation. No one is held to attend that service, and the pastor knows nothing, or very little, about those who are present. He is in the same case as is a missionary in a new field, who faces a congregation consisting mostly of strangers and casual visitors. The question of church fellowship or of the violation of our principles simply does not arise. It *would* arise if he were to officiate together with another traveling minister belonging to a heterodox body.

Filling the pulpit of a heterodox church is not unionistic in certain circumstances. Our instructors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, told us how Dr. Walther, when on a visit to Germany, preached in a certain congregation with which he was not in communion, after making the necessary announcements and stipulations. (What they were I have forgotten; but they were to the effect that his preaching there was not to be construed as an act of fellowship, but was merely an exposition of sound Lutheran teaching.) I recall that the late Prof. L. Dorn of Fort Wayne once did the same thing, when a church in that city had arranged a series of sermonic lectures in which the teachings of the various churches in the city were to be presented to that congregation by representative leaders. Everybody understood the

matter in that light, the question of church fellowship was totally absent.

But what of contact with non-Christians? Can what has been said be applied to them also? Why not? In the cities where the Jewish community is strongly represented — in New York City almost every third person is a Jew — some of our Christians are inevitably brought into business relations with them. It might become necessary or highly desirable to attend the funeral of a Jewish friend or business associate. I profess myself incapable of seeing that this would be a sinful act. One would avoid the synagogue — probably the funeral would be from the house —; but how can we speak of unionism or syncretism in such a case? What gives anyone the right to suppose even for a second that, by attendance at that funeral, we exhibit a liking for Jewish teachings? — or declare that we think their faith as good as ours, or deny our faith, or practice religious fellowship with the Jews? To me that is the most utter nonsense. Everyone knows that we are present merely to play the part of a friend or a relative. The issues and factors that determine unionism are simply non-existent.

Or again: we often sing "God Save the King" in mixed gatherings. Is that an instance of unionism? Someone ingeniously suggested to me that the national anthem expresses merely a wish but is not a prayer; and that we therefore are not practicing unionism when singing it with all and sundry. This will not do. As a matter of fact, the national anthem is indeed a prayer, as one cannot but realize at once when reading the stanza:

O Lord, our God, arise,
Scatter his enemies
And make them fall.
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks;
On Thee our hopes we fix —
God, save us all!

Should someone say that usually only the first stanza is sung, which may be construed as a wish, I should have to reply that I refuse to take shelter behind what seems to me no more than a subterfuge. My argument is again that when we sing the national anthem, not knowing who is the man standing next to us, the matter of church fellowship and all that this embraces — confession of truth, denial of error, etc., etc. — simply does not enter into consideration or operation; that the question of religious fellowship cannot possibly arise; and that hence we cannot speak of unionism, syncretism, or indifferentism in the given situation. The singing of the national anthem is no more than an expression of patriotism and loyalty.

A few years ago the Missouri Synod had to deal with a case where a prominent pastor had been declared ineligible for a call in that Synod on account of unionistic teaching and practice. The affair was looked into by a synodical committee. This committee presented on the floor of Synod a declaration by the man in question, which reads as follows:

“Scripture very plainly prohibits compromise of the truth, indifference to doctrine, unionism, and giving of offense, and therefore forbids every kind of prayer fellowship which involves one of these objectionable features. — There are in the domain of casuistry cases where the question whether unionistic prayer fellowship is involved cannot be answered in advance.”

On the strength of this statement — and another one, which does not concern us here — the committee held the gentleman to be eligible for the ministry; and Synod accepted the finding of the committee.

I believe that the resolution just quoted represents about all one can say by way of summing up situations in which the presence or absence of unionism is doubtful. I also be-

lieve that there are, and always will be, situations where the decision as to whether unionistic practice is involved is both difficult and doubtful, with the consequence that there may be a difference of opinion among orthodox Lutheran theologians; for we are now dealing with a *practical question* involving the *application* of certain Scripture truths to new surroundings and to a great number of changing and shifting circumstances. It follows that various incidents which may from time to time have to be examined for unionistic implications belong to the field of casuistry and that something will often have to be left to the individual conscience. This is not to say that uniformity of practice is not desirable and should not be aimed at.

The committee which busied itself with the case mentioned above brought in another resolution, which was also accepted by the convention. It is the following:

"We furthermore recommend that pastoral conferences throughout Synod earnestly and diligently study the Scripture passages pertinent to the question of prayer fellowship."

It may be well if we also, instead of taking too much for granted, follow the letter and the spirit of this resolution.

CHAPTER XII

Co-operation in External

*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good
unto all men. GAL. 6:10*

B_Y way of introduction to the discussion of externals in church life let us assume that there are twelve groups of men gathered in twelve cities. The first group is meeting in Chicago. It is the organization meeting of a new Masonic lodge. The second is in Springfield, where a group of Lutheran chaplains is discussing the problem of soldiers' engagements. In St. Louis the gathering discusses the public school program of released time for religious instruction. In Joplin there is a Good Friday service. In Tulsa a Red Cross Unit is being organized. A Lutheran Historical Society has its meeting in Oklahoma City, while an oratorio group meets at Amarillo. At Albuquerque there is a conference discussing the formation of a Boy Scout group. In Flagstaff a Liturgical Association has its annual meeting. At Long Beach a seminar for the study of Old Testament chronology is gathered; in Pasadena a Statistical Association; and at Los Angeles an Intersynod-

ical Lutheran conference is discussing the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

As we retrace our steps over these stations on Route 66, we notice, for one thing, that the framework of these meetings is identical. They are made up of American adults who meet in some organized fashion, a chairman presiding and a secretary taking the records.

This is the *causa materialis*, the *potential* Masonic Lodge, Red Cross Unit, Liturgical Association, etc. That which keeps these twelve meetings from being all alike, in spite of their identical framework, is the purpose that has called each unit into being. Not the purpose of the individual attending, of course. It is possible that the men at Chicago who are organizing a Masonic lodge are each imbued with the deep conviction that they are about to perform a fine Christian thing, that they can serve God and their Church through Masonry. This good purpose will certainly not make the transaction a good one. On the other hand, all men meeting at all these points may be motivated primarily by the purpose of gaining honor, income, or some other material advantage. This will not cause us to condemn the formation of this Red Cross Unit or of this Liturgical Association. What we mean by the purpose, the *causa finalis*, is the objective inherent in the thing, the answer to the question: WHY are these men here? It is this and nothing else that makes these meetings what they are.

We survey these gatherings once more, and we can readily select the organization in which a co-operation of Lutherans would be condemned by the well-instructed conscience. Membership in a Masonic lodge is participation in something which the Word of God condemns. At this conclusion we do not arrive by urging that "we are responsible for everything an organization does to which we belong." But the Mason is responsible for what his lodge does; and this

for two reasons: By his initiation he has approved of the entire Masonic system and has made its purpose his own. He is responsible now even if he never attends a meeting again. In the second place, when he does attend the lodge sessions, he is guilty through direct participation.

But when we turn to the other cities and survey the meetings being conducted there, we notice that several of these have a definitely spiritual, or, we may say, ecclesiastical purpose — the Good Friday service and the interysnodical pastoral conference. These deal with spiritual matters, doctrines of the Church, Christian relationships. What distinguishes them from the other nine is the presence of purposes originating in the Church and ending in the Church. As distinguished from these objectives, we speak of the *externals* of church life illustrated in the other examples given in this setup. The Lutheran chaplains are not gathered to express their unity in the faith or to attain Christian fellowship; they are exchanging experiences in their dealings with a vexing problem. Similarly, the offer of the city by which the denominations are given opportunity to use some public school time for religious instruction is an external thing so far as the arrangements of place, time, methods, and credits are concerned. Red Cross service is external to ecclesiastical life, and the Lutheran group or congregation which participates, participates simply as a civic group. The Historical Society, the Oratorio Society, the Liturgical Society, and the Statistical Association are composed of men all drawn together, not by a spiritual, but by a professional interest. The Seminar has its rallying point in the appeal of Old Testament scholarship. Lutheran Boy Scout leaders as Boy Scout leaders have no interest in the doctrines or the history or the cultus of their Church; they are organizing the program of scouting for the community.

It is very clear that there are centers of interest which

may draw Lutherans together which involve nothing of a confessional nature and in which the fellowship relation is neither the goal nor the motivating purpose. It is true that the contention has been made that "a working agreement with other church bodies, not in agreement with us on doctrine and practice, always involves doctrine," but this statement is impossible of proof, and the evidence is to the contrary. Certainly such a working agreement as now exists between the Missouri Synod and the Lutherans in the National Lutheran Council does not involve doctrine, but involves merely the joining of effort in the externals of spiritual service which these various Lutheran bodies are trying to render to their enlisted men. There is no assumption at all of identity of doctrine, as little as a Lutheran teacher of the blind attending a meeting of the American Association of Workers for the Blind thereby registers his agreement with the religious views represented. By joining in efforts external to the spiritual program of the Church we in no wise weaken or compromise the distinctive Lutheran teaching. The strength of this position is that nobody ever supposes that when Christians of different denominational families unite in work for the good of the community they are thereby disowning their own distinctive beliefs. In entering into a common movement they do not surrender their particular creeds. This is assumed and understood by all. Their agreements and disagreements remain, and without interference with the latter or attempts to harmonize them, they meet for co-operative effort on the basis of the former. "To deny that Christians can work together in externals until they have settled all their outstanding and outlying differences is as unreasonable as to claim that citizens who are agreed upon a program of municipal reform cannot combine for that end unless they have first composed their differences regarding Federal control of corporations doing

an interstate business." One might as well charge a man with sinful unionism because twice a year he has his teeth attended to by a Masonic dentist. To raise the question of "whether it is right to help a professed opponent of our Church by turning over business to him," is assuming that there is no field of adiaphora in our human relationships. The New Testament principle permits relationships with the world in externals so long as we do not participate in that which is evil (John 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:10).

At times there is a *co-ordination* of effort rather than a co-operation. In Chicago the *Daily Tribune* offers over its radio station WGN monthly broadcasts which are given over each to a denomination, the four broadcasts in April, 1942, having been assigned to the Lutheran Church. The fact that these broadcasts appear in a series with Baptists the preceding month and Methodists the following, does not make this unionism. The Columbia Broadcasting System publishes a booklet in which a number of Lutheran clergymen are pictured on the same page with the Presbyterian, a Jesuit, and a Jewish rabbi. Once more, this does not constitute unionism. They are the men who have conducted a service each in the "Church of the Air" on Sunday mornings. In the State of North Dakota the Child Welfare work of the Missouri Synod is being carried on in co-ordination with the Lutheran Welfare Society composed of A. L. Conference and U. L. C. Lutherans. There is no joint religious fellowship or participation in church services or mission work, but the Missouri Synod has relations through its District Welfare Committee which maintains official relations with the Lutheran Welfare Society, to which the members of Missouri Synod churches in North Dakota remit a sum adequate to carry on their share in this work. Again and again it was necessary to maintain such an agency for cases that came before the Juvenile Court. In the Chicago

area there exists a Lutheran Church Charities Committee, in which all the charities of the various Lutheran Synods in Chicago and Cook County are represented. The officers and directors are chosen from all the various synodical bodies. The purpose is to co-ordinate the services of our agencies in the field where services may be overlapping, to assist the member agencies in improving their standards of service; to assist the member agencies of the committee in a program of co-operation; to acquaint the agencies with one another; to arrange for conferences to discuss the work in the various fields of activity, such as child care, homes for the aged, family welfare, hospices, and health. This organization grew out of the need for a central office through which to deal with the community problems and activities. The organization was formed upon requests which came from the Council of Social Agencies of Chicago, the Association of Commerce, and the Community Fund officials. Efforts along the same lines in Buffalo and Greater New York have all proved the need of co-operation of Lutherans rather than co-operation with all Protestant denominations even in external matters related to the welfare field, education, the gathering of statistics, etc. Not only their doctrine, but their entire church life is different from that of the Lutheran Church.

The program of the National Lutheran Council (organized in 1918 out of the service for the armed forces) is concerned with a number of projects related to the externals of church work. Its Regulations set forth such purposes as: Publicity in matters requiring public utterance on behalf of the Lutheran Church, representation of Lutheran interests toward other organized bodies, the co-ordination of agencies of the Church that deal with problems arising out of war or to meet circumstances which require common action, the maintenance of right relations between Church and State,

and the gathering of statistical information. All work is to be done "without prejudice to the confessional "basis" and without "interfering with the principles of fellowship of its constituent bodies," acknowledging also "the right of the bodies themselves to determine the extent of co-operation." The minutes contain such expressions as these: "Let us not lose sight of the original purpose of the Council, to speak for the Church *in externis*. It has done this and is doing it now." The Missouri Synod has never passed judgment on this program and these principles as contrary to our views on church fellowship. It is co-operating at this writing with the National Lutheran Council in the maintenance and management of Lutheran Centers for the men in the armed forces. Efforts to co-ordinate the work of our Emergency Planning Council in the problems arising through the migration of workers in the war industries are now under way.

The physical relief of Lutheran missions orphaned by the war—the term applies particularly to missions formerly supported by the gifts of German and Norwegian Lutherans—involves no acknowledgment of unity in doctrine and is a work external to the spiritual activities of our Church. Moneys given to this cause are intended to preserve from starvation and to supply with clothing and medical care missionaries and other workers in the foreign field left without physical support. Such benevolence comes under the general admonition to "do good unto all men" (Gal. 6:10). That in view of our inability to help all those in distress we select (among others) Lutheran missionaries, though not of our own "household of faith," is an expression of our desire that with Satan loosed on earth and destroying the visible churches that which remains of them will not be only Roman Catholic or Modernist. Every Lutheran definitely is interested in keeping Lutheranism alive. Hence also united action in self-defense, to meet defamation, unfair legislation, Roman Catholic aggression.

Next we shall note that there is a permissible co-ordination of our efforts as members of some group in which we participate in a general program. At Fort Knox, Ky., there is a military training center with a large number of chaplains. These agreed on a series of religious activities during the Lenten season. A booklet was printed announcing the program, and a page was given to the Lutheran services, two a week during Lent. The agreement as to time and place of these services as part of a general Lenten program, and the publication of dates and topics in this pamphlet we call co-ordination in externals. At Fort Wayne the Mayor in 1942 requested all churches to observe December 6 as "Day of Special Prayer." The plan called for all churches to hold special devotions and exercises. The Lutheran churches concurred in the arrangement. Again this was a kind of co-operation which in no sense implied relations of fellowship and which involved externals only, that is, an agreement regarding the date for an observance of the anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

Then there is the large field of adiaphora, in which the principle of Christian liberty must prevail. There may be a community of interest altogether divorced from the spiritual which will call certain forms of co-operative endeavor into being. These we shall consider next.

Theology has its professional side. Certain forms of scholarship are so definitely scientific, technical in character, that those drawn together by these interests do not for any such reason consider themselves, nor are they considered by others, as thereby entering into a fellowship relation. All Lutherans are interested in providing correct information, historical, statistical, and otherwise, for those who wish to be informed about Lutheranism. For this reason it was entirely proper that the late Dr. A. L. Graebner contributed a number of articles to the *Lutheran Cyclopedia* published in 1899

by Charles Scribner under the editorship of two professors of the General Council. The difference between substance and accident is again easily distinguished, the substance in this undertaking being a scholarly endeavor, and the co-operation of Lutherans *as such*, the accidental. In 1934 a Lutheran scholar supervised the publication of a symposium called *The Translated Bible*. A member of the Missouri Synod contributed an article on "German Versions Before 1534," while scholars from other Lutheran bodies discussed "The Bible in Swedish," "The Printing Press," "The Bible and Missions," etc. In St. Louis, members of the faculty of Concordia Seminary "co-operated" with other Lutherans and indeed Protestants generally in bringing together two hundred Bibles for a loan exhibit of rare Bibles arranged by the Church Federation of St. Louis (1935). At the Luther Academy in Dubuque, Iowa, and at Valparaiso University, seminars have been conducted purely on the side of theological scholarship and historical science, and among those who contributed to such lecture courses there were members of the Missouri Synod. At St. Olaf College the faculties of Lutheran colleges have been meeting in annual conference to discuss such questions of interest to all Lutheran educators as "Where Is the Religious Education Movement Leading Us?" "Teaching Biology Subjects in Lutheran Colleges," "Medical Training for Missionaries," "United Plan of Insurance for All Lutheran Colleges," "Humanism and Religion," and "Theological Books in a College Library." It is certainly desirable at gatherings like these for a Missouri Synod Lutheran to hear what scholars like T. G. Tappert and J. C. Mattes can submit as a result of their research or a man like F. Melius Christiansen in the field of music in Lutheran colleges. Once more, it cannot with good reason be said that faith is being denied (when faith is not involved) or false doctrine tolerated (when such doctrines

as are presented are freely discussed), since the occasion is one definitely keyed to the idea of scholarship, with the exclusion of all fellowship relations.

There are forms of art which will draw us together with those of our denomination and of others. Singing in a choral society which produces the *Messiah* or the *Mass in B Minor* is not sinful unionism. Every element of the correct definition of unionism is lacking. When the choir of Midland College (U. L. C.) sang in recital at our Seward Seminary in 1934, this was not "unionistic," nor was it "offensive." And if some boy or girl from the Missouri Synod enrolled at Midland took part in this recital of religious music, *they* were not "giving offense." No one who is willing to apply straight thinking to the matter will say otherwise. As little as we would charge with unionism the Missouri Synod writer who would contribute an imaginative, poetic, or historical sketch to the symposium entitled *Christmas* published as a piece of ecclesiastical art annually by the Publishing House of the Norwegian Lutheran Church. And since we are touching the field of publication, let it be said that for a member of one Lutheran body to have a book of his published by the publishing concern owned by another Lutheran body does not involve him in "unionism," as little as obtaining a degree — be it earned or honorary — from a Lutheran college, university, or theological seminary can be said to give just cause for "offense" when the degree is conferred in recognition of scholarly achievement or otherwise for some contribution which ordinarily is recognized by both religious and secular institutions through the conferring of a degree. One can readily see the difference between such *externals* to theology or church life and, on the other hand, the *fellowship* to which expression is given by joint religious services, fraternal greetings, and communing at the same altar. By publishing the manuscripts

of theologians of the United Lutheran Church, the Publishing House of the Missouri Synod in no sense implies or suggests fellowship of the Missouri Synod with the United Lutheran Church, as little as accepting a degree of Doctor of Theology from a theological seminary of the United Lutheran Church makes the recipient responsible for the theology of that institution or of the United Lutheran Church as a body.

There are purely *social* relationships which involve no suggestion of Christian fellowship. Merely as members of strong Lutheran communities, the people of all Synods support (in the State of Iowa, in the Detroit area) general Lutheran newspapers, bearing such names as *The Inter-Synod Lutheran News* and *The Detroit Lutheran*. It would be preposterous to charge those with unionism who edit, contribute to, subscribe for, advertise in, and read such newspapers. In Northern Wisconsin some time ago the Bonduel Public Schools and St. Paul's Lutheran School sponsored a unique welcoming at a dinner at a local hotel. The affair was given in honor of an evangelical clergyman and his wife who lately moved to town, the new minister of a Wisconsin Synod congregation, and three new instructors in the Bonduel Public Schools. The entire affair was conducted as a purely social gathering, the pastor of the Missouri Synod church speaking for the committee of welcome, the principal of our parish school acting as master of ceremonies, and the intention of the whole affair was not to indicate a community of religious interest, but of showing the kindness and good feeling of the Lutheran people to their fellow citizens. We have on similar grounds never hesitated to accept an invitation to the meetings of the Rotarians, Kiwanis, Lions' Club, Optimists, and would not declare "unionistic" (because of the table prayer offered) the membership which many of our pastors hold in these

organizations. The common sense of the community would not tolerate the idea that by such membership the Lutheran minister gives evidence of his approval of the Catholic mass, of the Baptist's rejection of infant baptism, or of the Presbyterian member's ideas about predestination. Everybody knows that the purpose of the organization is social, benevolent, educational, professional, but in no sense religious.

We are living in an age which calls for a re-thinking, a new thinking-through of all our principles of church work, not in order to revise them, but in order to obtain a clear understanding of their application to new issues and new conditions. The *American Lutheran* said early in 1943:

"The entire question of our relationship to other Christians was more or less theoretical during that period of our synodical history when we were a comparatively isolated, foreign-language group, whose work was done primarily in small villages and rural areas. The past several decades, however, have brought about great changes with reference to our status in American life. The change from the almost exclusive use of German in our pulpits to the almost exclusive use of English, the complete cessation of immigration, with the resultant necessity of addressing our missionary endeavors to the unchurched English speaking Americans residing in our own immediate communities, and the more complete integration of our Church and its work in American life have brought our Church more fully to the attention of the American public. As a result of this, our pastors and missionaries find themselves with ever-increasing frequency called upon to serve as speakers at meetings of service clubs, patriotic groups, etc., to which our German speaking forebears seldom, if ever, were invited."

In other words, while formerly our relation to the world around us was purely ecclesiastical, confessional, there are now community relationships which take account of us as

fellow citizens, fellow human beings, that have projected themselves into the scene. Contacts and opportunities present themselves in which we may find new means of bringing the Gospel to our neighbors through arrangements which in their essence are purely externals. And so we read a report of a conference committee in St. Louis which commences thus: "A joint committee of the Roman Catholic Church, the Church Federation, Lutherans, Jews, and Christian Scientists has issued a statement to the public school authorities requesting that superintendents and teachers encourage the children to participate in the released-time program for religious education."

More than ever before we must beware of permitting our principles to degenerate into mere formulas. The beginning of our re-thinking was made fifteen years ago when the principle that "a lodge member may not be communed in our churches" was saved from becoming a formula of the legalistic kind through the adoption of our lodge resolutions in 1926 and 1929. Definitely we have more recently eliminated the doctrinaire method of exercising discipline against people because of "lodge membership." We do not ask today whether a man is a "lodge member." We ask whether he is a Mason, a Modern Woodman, a Royal Neighbor. And in regard to each of these orders, we ask what part, if any, of the definition of a lodge applies to them. We distinguish, on the one hand, orders that have a ritual, prayers, altar, chaplain, an oath, the claim of spiritual advancement and the guarantee of heaven as a reward for following the principles of the order, and which demand an acceptance of all these teachings (in the initiation) from every candidate. On the other hand, we find that while still retaining certain religious features, some have eliminated the teaching of salvation by human works and merits. There are orders which no longer make obligation on a ritual a condition of

membership and simply write insurance without any oath, membership in a local organization, or attendance of meetings of any kind. To call such orders "lodges" and condemn membership in them as though all who join participate and make themselves responsible for certain religious practices, would be pure verbalism. It would be dealing with names instead of things. It would be treating accidental features as though they were the essence of the relation. There are labor unions and farmers' organizations which possess objectionable features but do not make these the essence of the organization. In the case of such orders, religious principles and teachings are not the declared purpose, but are accidental to the essence of the organization. This does not mean that we may take an attitude of absolute toleration. Even industrial organizations may impose conditions that will make it impossible for Christians to assume. But whether such is the case in the individual brotherhood would depend upon a close examination of its ritual and the study of its distinctive features. Compare with such organizations a certain minor order which unites its members for the definite purpose "to develop Spiritual Life and to stimulate Christian Activities," which says in its constitution that all who accept these aims and purposes and who hold themselves responsible to "The King, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" are eligible for membership; which accepts and teaches the "Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man"; which pretends to be an expression of "the longing for reality in religion"; in which the members are pledged to "hold themselves responsible to the King, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Such an order, while not deistic, is still of such a definitely unionistic type that in it no Christian can have affiliation with a good conscience. Re-thinking the fellowship problem certainly demands that such distinctions are recognized and a purely external connection (as by the purchase of an insurance policy) is

distinguished from a spiritual relationship contrary to the Word of God.

The principal offense is given through the universalist prayers and addresses customary at lodge funerals. When Dr. T. E. Schmauk was President of the General Council, he went on record against the participation of Lutheran ministers in such ceremonies. He said:

"If the Lutheran Church takes a position that in general its fellowship in pulpit and altar is not for non-Lutherans, that fact in itself has a direct bearing on the principle of secret societies. Not only non-Lutherans, but Unitarians, Jews, and non-Christians, are admitted to membership and participation in the religious fellowship and burial of these societies. Any organization that claims the right to bury a man with its own rite which is outside of, even if not contradictory to, the rite of the Christian Church, predicates a fellowship of faith and eternal life which is different from that of Christianity in our pulpits and at our altars, and we cannot in consistency refuse to draw those lines also at the grave."*

It would take us too far afield to discuss in detail the various contacts which develop out of the common interest which Church, State, and the American community have in civic righteousness. We refer the reader to an excellent paper contributed by the Rev. G. Huebner on the *Justitia Civilis* to the 1938 volume of the *Concordia Theological Monthly*. When the State is so vitally interested in civic righteousness — which up to a certain point (including the principles of natural law) is identical with Christian ethics as to contents (though not in its motivation) — it is clear that there may be contacts and co-operation between the Church as a civic body interested in righteousness and the temporal State, of congregation and community, without in-

* Quoted in Sandt, *Biography*, p. 257.

volving either in a mixing of Church and State or committing the Church to an unscriptural unionism. An illustration is the case of the Boy Scouts, an organization which definitely undertakes to imbue its membership with ideals of a moral civic character but which today recognizes its deficiency of a spiritual motivation and depends upon the churches to supply it, permitting each denomination to interpret righteousness and piety and placing the church troop under the exclusive religious direction of the congregation. To ignore the changes which the Boy Scouts have made in their definition of their relation to the Church would again be a case of ignoring reality. Such objectionable features as when a sectarian scoutmaster teaches evolutionism, or religious syncretism, or leads the troop in a unionistic, probably deistic worship, are accidental to the movement as a whole, do not belong into the purposes of scouting, are not a required practice, whereas the scout program with its skills, its ideals of self-help and resourcefulness, is an external in which the Christian boy may participate without thereby giving up any part of his religious convictions and principles or entering into a spiritual fellowship.

The major premise in all these matters is the Christian principle of liberty, from which it follows that things not forbidden as sinful in Scripture are left to the good sense and judgment of the believer, who as a child of God has the use of all temporal things — "all things are yours" (1 Cor. 3:22).

In Conclusion

Discussion of every detail is not possible in a field which takes in as much territory as the nature and practice of fellowship. These chapters, however, supply the Scriptural viewpoint which will enable the minister or layman who faces a new situation to recognize its place in the general scheme and to act with decision either in refusing or accepting, even offering, his co-operation. Such questions as

the following have been brought to our attention while these chapters were being written: "I may *listen to*, but may I *join in* the prayers of the heterodox?" "May our members who are married to heterodox Christians maintain the family altar, pray together, read their Bible together?" "Is the support of the American Bible Society by our Churches unionism?" "Can a pastor of our Synod serve a vacant congregation not affiliated with the Synodical Conference although that congregation has no intention of severing connections with its Synod, in fact, is preparing to call a pastor of its own Synod?" "Can a pastor of our Synod open a patriotic rally with a prayer?" The answer to all these questions involves the principle that circumstances alter cases. Certainly, a Lutheran wife will not join her Catholic husband in a prayer to Mary. Again, co-operation in externals may be objectionable even without involving us in "unionism." A Missouri Synod pastor who is smarting under the sheep-stealing practices of another Lutheran preacher will be guided in his action in view of the offense he might create by any kind of public association with him. The very presence of some people on the platform with us may offend the sense of fitness of those who know. The example of St. John fleeing the bath where Cerinth, the heresiarch, was a visitor, comes to mind. In general, when the situation or occasion, as viewed by the common man, will identify me with heterodoxy, my place is elsewhere, even if my presence could not be properly called "unionism." Suitable regard will be shown by the pastor to his parishioners if he knows their Christian understanding to be weak. Christian charity may dictate a refusal even where participation would be in externals only or at least not offensive to the well-instructed mind. No situation will confound us if we are guided by love for the truth and love to our fellow man in the freedom which is ours in Christ, and giving priority always to testimony for saving truth.

We are at the end of our treatise. Its purpose, as announced in the title — the authors are convinced — will find no contradiction anywhere in the Lutheran Church. New efforts, on a Scriptural basis, towards a union of all Lutherans, are certainly in place in an age of crisis like our own. The authors have carefully scanned the records of union effort, past and present, and have not overlooked any angle of the controversies which, in the Synodical Conference and without, have developed, paradoxical though it may sound, about the Missouri Synod's union resolutions of 1938. But it was not the purpose of the authors of this treatise to analyze and evaluate the various opinions and judgments pro and con. Rather, their task was a re-examination and a re-statement of underlying principles, thus to offer the reader the means by which he may arrive at personal convictions regarding all issues involved. As a further consideration, these principles have been so stated as to cover situations which every pastor in these days is likely to meet and which he cannot evade, yes, regarding which he may be compelled to make a decision on the instant. Hence this copious Scriptural review of the fellowship principle, of the doctrine of the Church, of the basic processes of deriving our teachings from the Holy Scriptures. Hence also the frequent references to theological treatises of other writers, both of the past and of the present, as documentation for the ecumenical character of the judgments which make up the substance of this treatise. The reader cannot fail to have noted that some of the most cogent reasoning, the most lucid testimonies to Scripture truth and Lutheran practice, have been taken from authors of the American Lutheran Conference and of the United Lutheran Church.

That this contribution may aid in establishing agreement in all underlying issues in the movement toward Lutheran union, is the wish and prayer of the authors. If they were

asked, what might be hoped for in the way of immediate practical results from the publication of this volume, the answer must be — that is beyond the ken of the wisest. They would say: We are concerned, not so much with tangible results as with stating, to friends and opponents alike, by what erroneous conceptions the road to Lutheran solidarity is being made difficult. Ours is a negative job — that of removing misunderstandings and of pointing out some common faults in reasoning. Positive results — these belong to God, who alone knows the times and seasons also for the development of new relationships in the church visible.

Yet there are a few things concerning which the authors entertain certain definite hopes. They might be so bold as to call them expectations if they could assume that the reader* is willing to put as much thought and concentration into the reading of these chapters as the authors have put into their production. We may say that on this — rather optimistic — premise there should be a few *Never Again*s. As, for instance, we hope that

Never again will the critics of our Inspiration dogma confuse Verbal Inspiration with “mechanical inspiration.”

Never again will any reader demand union on the basis of agreement in fundamentals only.

Never again will he ignore the difference between doctrines of the faith and problems of theology.

Never again will he call every doctrinal aberration a heresy.

Never again will he blame Missouri or any other Lutheran body for some *obiter dictum* of a theologian or editor.

Never again will he make an absolute identification of

* As will be seen in the following, we have in mind a composite personage — made up of Missouri Synod readers and those without.

a Scripture doctrine with the theological formulations of it traditional in some Lutheran body.

Never again will he plead for a union arrived at by the easy road of calling those points on which we differ "open questions."

Never again will he argue for the right to have prayer fellowship with anyone whom he believes to be a Christian.

Never again will he identify all joint prayer with "prayer fellowship."

Never again will he charge a brother or an opponent with false doctrine in a matter on which the brother or the opponent has given proof elsewhere of his orthodoxy.

Never again will he be guilty of the hypocrisy of making of every non-Missourian mote a beam and of every Missourian beam a mote or vice versa.

Never again will he forget that our insistence on an agreement on the basis of Scripture cannot be brushed aside with a haughty "you can't make me sign on the dotted line!"

Never again will he make words take the place of things and throw the Church into confusion.

Never again will he sneer at "logical refinements" — unless he is willing to pass sentence on the authors of the Formula of Concord.

Never again will he hold up to scorn a Missouri preacher who through an erring conscience refused Communion to a serviceman and keep silence regarding one hundred preachers who accept 10,000 communicants who worship at deistic lodge altars.

Never again will he charge a brother or an opponent with intent to mislead on the basis of suspicions and forced constructions, omitted "quotes," or faulty references.

Neger again will he claim that by not praying with him we "excommunicate" him.

Never again will he believe that to say that a situation or

action is "unionistic" or "offensive" settles the matter — or settles anything.

Never again will he declare that a Synod exists *iure humano*, but treat it as *iure divino* at the altar.

Never again will he decry a fanatical conservatism which does not please God, but condone a fanatical liberalism which does the work of the devil.

We might continue, but this should suffice as a summary of the things your authors have, in the premises, a right to hope for.

They are actuated by a desire to see this beloved Lutheran Church less in that condition which the poet describes as

"By schisms rent asunder,

"By heresies distressed —

a "scornful wonder" to the ungodly. They have heard the voice of a cry of impatience from the saints —

"Their cry goes up, 'How long?'"

